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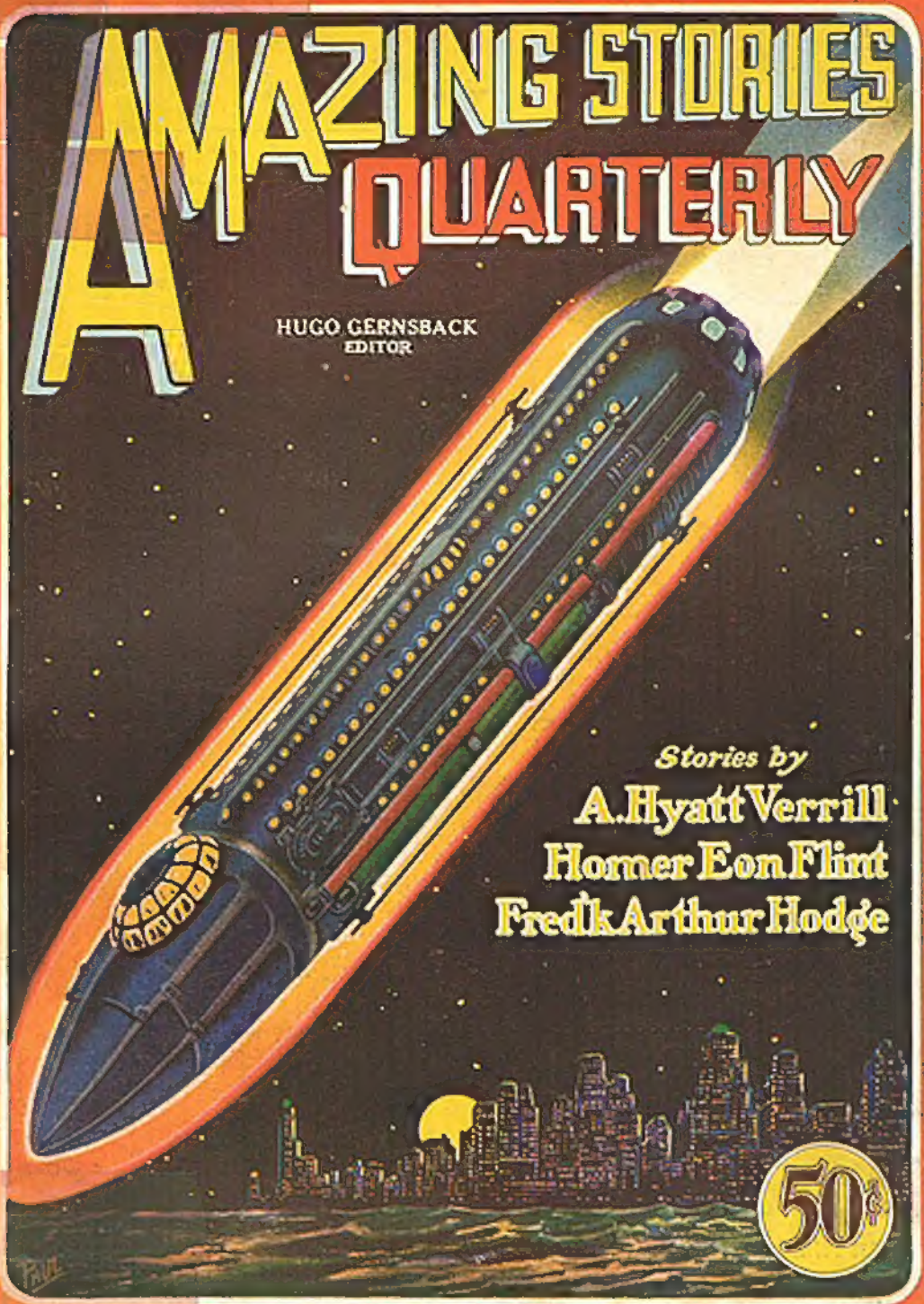
AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY

HUGO GERNSBACK
EDITOR



Stories by
A. Hyatt Verrill
Homer Eon Flint
Fredk Arthur Hodge

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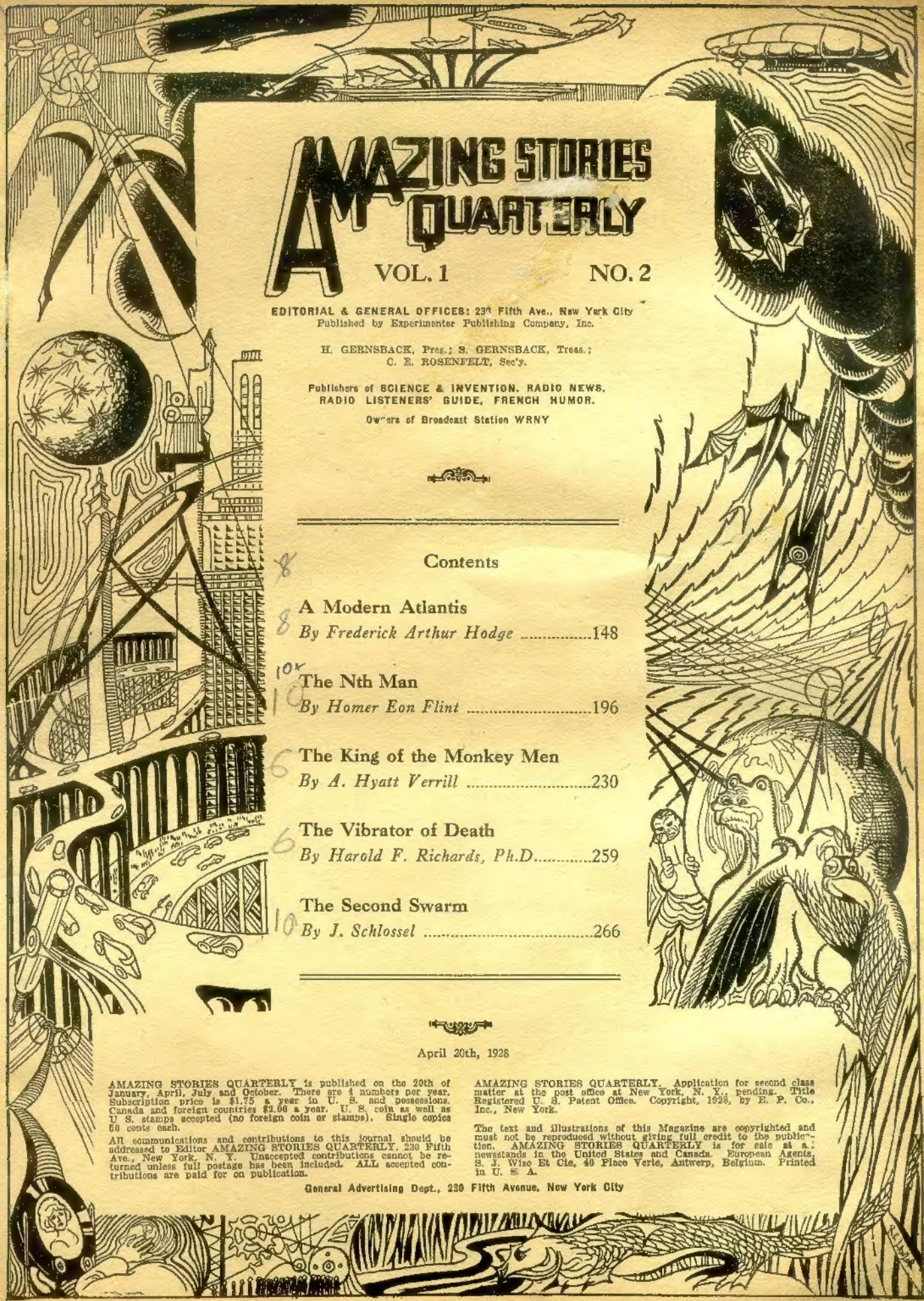

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April 20th, 1928

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The Rise of Scientifiction

By Hugo Gernsback

SINCE AMAZING STORIES and its sister magazines, AMAZING STORIES ANNUAL and AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY came into being, a great change has taken place in scientifiction literature. When the magazine was first launched, we had no original manuscripts at all. Little by little, as the magazine continued to grow, original scientifiction manuscripts began to arrive, and it became possible to have less and less reprints. The initial issue of AMAZING STORIES contained 100% reprints, that is, stories all of which had been published before. The tendency now however, is distinctly the other way. In the current issues of AMAZING STORIES, the only reprints published are some of the stories of the Jules Verne and H. G. Wells type, for which there seems to be a constant demand by the many readers who have not seen these classics before.

When we brought out the YEAR BOOK last Summer, we featured only one original story, "The Master Mind of Mars," by Edgar Rice Burroughs. All other stories were reprints. The first QUARTERLY, three months ago, contained only one reprint—H. G. Wells' famous story, "When the Sleeper Wakes." All other stories were original.

And now, the second issue of the QUARTERLY contain 100% new stories, all of them original. This again, is an experiment, in the first place, because until very recently, there were not enough new scientifiction stories to go around, and secondly, because the few that were submitted, were not always good enough to publish.

But times are rapidly changing. Scientifiction may now be said to have arrived with a bang. More and more authors of the better kind are taking to scientifiction as the proverbial duck takes to water. It is a great source of satisfaction to us, and we point to it with pride, that 90% of the really good scientifiction authors are Americans, the rest being scattered over the world. We believe that America will in time, become known as the hotbed of scientifiction, and that more excellent scientifiction will be turned out in this country than anywhere else. Already, in our editorial opinion, our modern authors have far eclipsed both Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. We know that is a broad statement, and one of vast import, but it is true, nevertheless. It takes time for a new art to develop and while we are not as yet at the top, we are slowly getting there, certainly, and the movement of scientifiction will sooner or later assume proportions far exceeding the expectations of most of us.

Just as there are cycles in style, there are cycles in literature. During the last few decades, for instance, there were cycles of the exposé story; then we had the boys detective cycle; next the real detective stories; more recently the sex story; and still more recently, the self confession story. These are only the outstanding distinct types. Of course, there are many others. But the scientifiction cycle is now in its ascendancy and is growing rapidly.

The Next Issue of the Quarterly Will Be on the Newsstands July 20th

A MODERN ATLANTIS

By Frederick Arthur Hodge

PROLOGUE

ON a certain winter's night in 1922, a small group of men chatted comfortably about an open fire, in the great room of the Harvard Club, in New York City. They had been classmates a few years before, when the Imperial German Government elected to dictate to the sovereign people of these United States, as to when, where, and under what conditions, ships might sail on the high seas, without being sent to Davy Jones' locker by German submarines. In the days that had followed, had come the dissolution of ties,—family, social, and fraternal. Among those now reassembled, this narrative is concerned only with two.

Bob Holden, tall, slender, and dynamic in personality and action, had placed at the service of his government, during those trying times, a well balanced scientific mind, destined to brilliant achievements in the field of aeronautics. Much valuable data contributed by him, now lies buried in the sepulchres of the extensive government graveyards in Washington. Some day, his monographs may be found, red penciled with the comments and vetoes of a corps of efficiency experts, the just reward of whose merits lies in the fact, that they have been entirely forgotten in the era of post war progress.

Jerry Scott, soldier of fortune, gentleman vagabond, artist and rover, had served overseas in a variety of capacities. His war posters were much sought in England, France, and America, to stimulate and encourage the various branches of service. He played and sang his way into the hearts of the doughboys, and organized amateur theatricals and minstrel shows to reinspire flagging spirits. His unfailing optimism and contagious flow of good spirits, made him a great favourite with both officers and men, and led to many special details where the morale of the troops needed stimulation. Thus, he substituted at first aid stations on the fighting front when doctors were scarce; had an ambulance blown from under him by a shell near Verdun; captured six Germans in one day in the Argonne; and, after the armistice, went blithely on an extended tour to little known corners of the world, finally turning up in New York, after a lapse of some two years.

IT has been said, with a good deal of justification, that the average scientifiction story is just what its name implies, i. e., science and fiction. Jules Verne, for instance, wrote good science in his fiction, but there was little literature contained in it. The same may be said of many others.

The present story, however, is a scientifiction classic that will gain in importance as years go by. Yet, fantastic as the story seems, it is all based upon absolute fact.

The invention of the isleports was made some years ago by Edw. R. Armstrong, an engineer of Wilmington, Del. He actually built a number of models, and it was believed that the isleport would make an ideal base in the middle of the Atlantic. The models demonstrated that a model ship alongside would pitch and toss, whereas the isleport would stand as steady as a rock in the midst of the heavy seas. Photographs of the models have been reproduced in the text of this story for the sake of completeness. And lest you think that the deadly ray which the author shows so vividly is a matter of pure fiction—no doubt it was fiction when Mr. Hodge wrote the story—read the May issue of RADIO NEWS *Magazine, in which an account of these new rays will be found. It is true that the rays are still only in the laboratory, but you may be sure that within a very few years, they will be used for practical purposes, and then we will witness scenes not unlike those described by the author.*

On the night in question, the conversation had drifted to the Limitation of Armaments Conference, then in session in Washington. Some one ventured the opinion that Secretary Hughes was playing a foxy hand—he knew from the results of recent naval tests of bombing planes, that battleships were things of the past. Holden remarked that it would be only a matter of a few years before airplanes in war, would likewise become obsolete. Another member of the group had opened his mouth to question Holden's reasons for such a statement, when Jerry Scott, who had been rummaging through a newspaper, suddenly jumped up with:

"Good God, did you see this Bob? Fellows, did you read this thing about Jack Rutherford? We were pals in France, went through Hell together. You all remember Jack. You know he wouldn't do a thing like that in his right mind. I tell you he couldn't."

"Well, what is it?" said Holden. "What has Jack done?"

Jerry Scott was still clutching the paper, waving it excitedly. "Why of all the vile things; he deserted her, — the woman who saved his life,—was about to marry another, church wedding and all that, when his wife appears at the altar, tells her story and exhibits their marriage certificate. And there was a marriage, fellows. I was with them when they were married in Paris. Now Jack doesn't even remember her—amnesia, due to shell shock, his folks say."

Scott dropped into a chair and continued reminiscently. "Kathleen Riley was her name. A bewitching Irish lass—fathomless blue eyes and hair black as raven's wing. You know the type, and true as steel. Father was a noted exponent of Irish freedom—got implicated some way with Sir Roger Casement smuggling arms into Ireland. Case against him wasn't very clear, but he was convicted on circumstantial evidence under 'Plotting Against the Realm Act.' Feeling ran high at that time, and he was executed. That made her hate England, so she got across to the German lines somehow and went in for nursing. Just wanted to lose her own trouble by doing her bit to relieve the suffering of others. Her mother had died when she was a baby and she was educated in a French Convent. Afterwards became a great pal

Guests arriving at the isleport by airplane, alighted on a vast level field which constituted the upper landing deck. From this deck, they were conducted down a long inclined ramp to the fourth deck. Here they entered the hotel at the seventh floor and descended by elevator to the third floor, and so on to the different decks. The lower deck was used for engineering purposes . . . there was a splendid golf course, tennis courts, a palm garden, etc., on the various levels . . . The light between the decks was excellent and uniform, owing to the fact that on the ocean, light is reflected from the facets of the waves at every possible angle.

for her dad and they traveled about together all over Europe. Spoke half a dozen European tongues like the natives and had lived in Vienna, Prague, Berlin, Berne, and all over Italy and France. Couldn't have been over nineteen when the war closed, it seemed as though she had lived a century, she was still a flower in the bud. She had laughing eyes, always challenging to a frolic, and the type of spirit that can never die.

"You see I met her the same day Jack Rutherford met her. It was in the Argonne, August, 1918, when we were just getting fairly started on the final drive. There was a small French village that was taken and retaken several times the same day. We drove 'em into the village and they rallied. Don't make any mistake about it, those Heinies were fighting about that time. Machine guns were rat-a-tating from every window and from behind every wall, and we beat it back for reinforcements. Then I missed Jack. Well, our artillery laid down a barrage and we went at 'em again. Just as we made the rise in front of the village, I stumbled and half fell into a shell hole. It was big as a house, and as I looked across the chasm, I saw her. She had just come out to give first aid to a wounded doughboy in the hole, and a long-armed gorilla type Austrian officer was pulling her back to cover; she resisted and tried to wrench free from his grasp. It took a moment for me to get the situation clear, then I saw the Austrian whip out a revolver and his arm swung out and down for a pot shot at the Yank. That made me mad clean through; it was the sort of thing that hadn't been done since early in the war, and just then she knocked his hand up. He struck her with his clenched fist, and I fired.

"It had all taken place in an instant, but each separate movement was etched into my mind, like a series of motion pictures flashed on a screen, and I was crossing the big hole to find Jack Rutherford, his head supported on the arm of the nurse, drinking from her flask. The Austrian, with blood streaming from his jaw, escaped into the doorway of a house on the upper edge of the hole."

Scott passed his hand over his eyes, as if to erase the scene from his brain, and then resumed. "Well, God only knows how she got him back behind our lines, for I had to leave them there and go on with the rest of the boys; couldn't stop to help a wounded pal you know, that was orders. But that nurse was as cool and self-possessed as if she were sitting on a bench in Central Park.

"We were driven out of the village half an hour later, when the Heinies laid down a barrage that reduced it to gravel, but they were gone when I passed the hole on the way back. I didn't see them again until after the Armistice. It was then that she told me about her life. It seems that she had foreseen the end of the war, and wanted to get away from that Austrian, who had been pestering her with his attentions and wanted to marry her. Jack had been plugged in the arm and leg. She had nursed him through fever and shell-shock, and when I ran across them in Paris, he was coming round to the old Jack Rutherford again, except for occasional fainting spells and some queer lapses of memory at times. I was with them when they were married, then I slipped away—gave her my best pal and went down to the land where King Tut once ruled, to try and forget the triumphs that civilization had brought to the world. Jack was going to return home, leaving her to straighten out some matters concerning her father's estate. He wanted to break the news to his people rather gently, for he knew that they had other plans for him. He expected to return for her in a few months.

"It's only one little incident in the aftermath of war. But I never could forget that little Irish nurse, risking her life to save one from the camp of the enemy, in the name of humanity. Boys, what a picture! I once tried to paint her fighting with that beast over the broken body of Jack Rutherford—American doughboy. But gentlemen, there never was a sable that grew hair fine enough to put the humanity into the eyes of the woman who saved Jack's life. And for what purpose now; for what?"

No one had ever seen Jerry Scott so moved, and there was silence and a lump in the throat of his comrades for a time after he had finished his story. Finally Bob Holden broke the spell.

"Jerry has painted his picture," he said simply, "and it will live with all of us. To such a woman, no man could ever give the half of the happiness that she deserves. But war is a destroyer whose toll is not to be numbered by its casualties. In honor of this woman who has given so much, I pledge myself and whatever I can do, to the abolition of war."

Standing with uplifted glasses, the little group repeated as one man.

"To the abolition of war."

* * *

CHAPTER I

The Fate of an Incognito

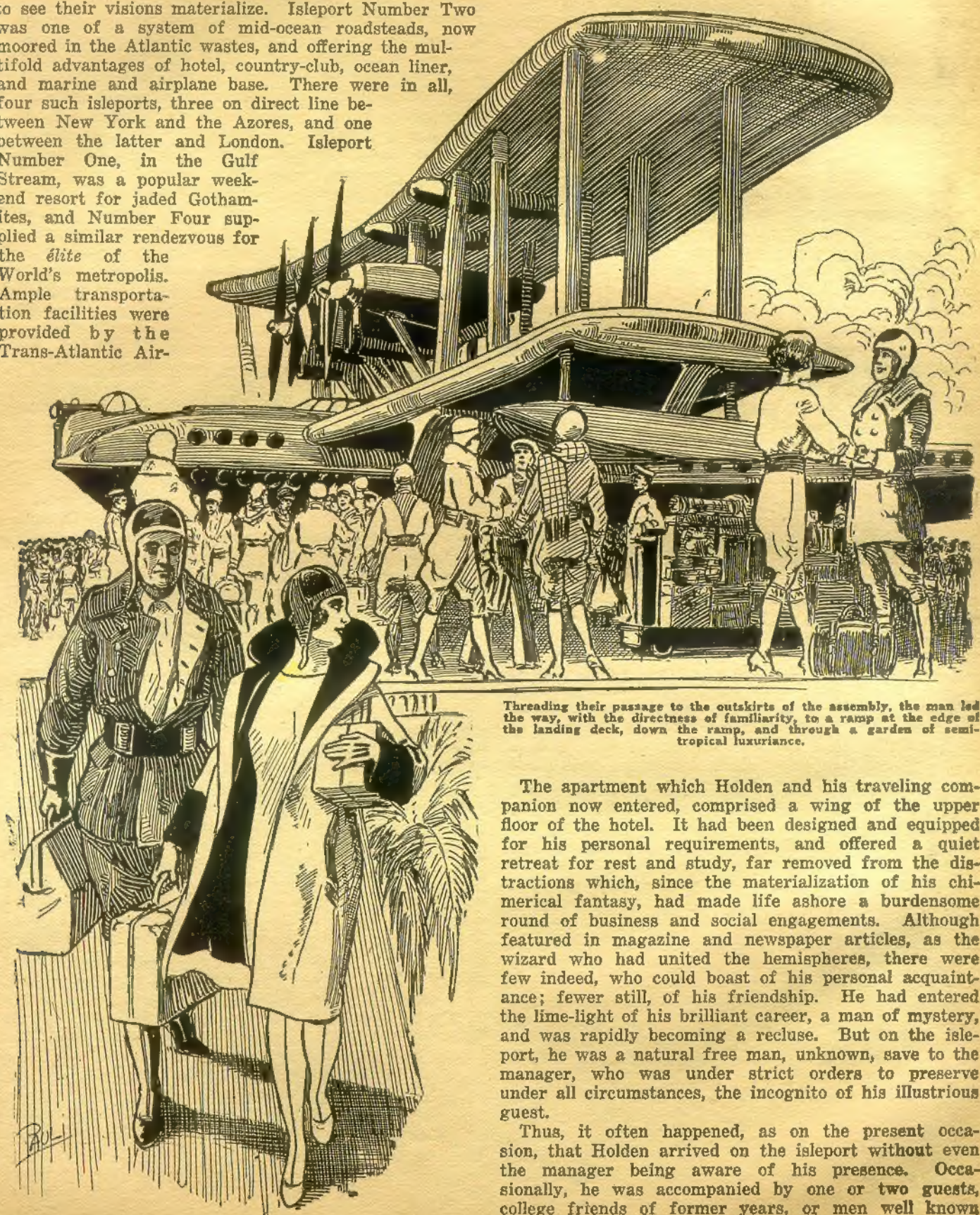
THE September sun was some two hours above the western horizon one afternoon in the early nineteen thirties, when out from its red hazed disk, there floated a huge aerobird, with steadily increasing reverberations, which broke in upon the stillness of the autumn air like the roll of a machine gun. Approaching its mid-ocean destination, the staccato from its exhausts was diminished, as the pilot successively cut out eight of its ten powerful motors. Then, as it descended in a sweeping curve, the last two were silenced, and it glided gracefully as some super-gull, to its resting place on top of what might have appeared to be another species of the same genus, only infinitely greater in size.

Had it been possible for one to stand at a distance on that waste of waters, the spectacle might easily have translated itself into the illusion of a chick hopping to the back of its mother, as she dozed in the quiet of her afternoon siesta.

An observer at closer range, mingling in the throng which, like the inhabitants of some remote village, had gathered on the landing deck of Isleport Number Two, to witness the arrival of the daily mail, might have noticed among the seventy or more passengers, who disembarked for a few moments to stretch their tired muscles, while the plane was being refueled, a man of more than medium height, accompanied by a woman wrapped in a fur coat, slipping quietly and unobtrusively through the crowd. Threading their passage to the outskirts of the assembly, the man led the way with the directness of familiarity, to a ramp at the edge of the landing deck; down the ramp, and through a garden of such semi-tropical luxuriance as to remind one of some sequestered haven of the An-

tilles. Their course soon brought them to a building centrally located in the ensemble. An outer door, facing upon the garden, was opened with a pass key, and the two proceeded through a passage, up a flight of stairs, then through another door similarly opened and into a spacious room, answering to the requirements of library and general lounging room.

Bob Holden, for such was the designation of the tall traveler, was one of those few geniuses, who live to see their visions materialize. Isleport Number Two was one of a system of mid-ocean roadsteads, now moored in the Atlantic wastes, and offering the multifold advantages of hotel, country-club, ocean liner, and marine and airplane base. There were in all, four such isleports, three on direct line between New York and the Azores, and one between the latter and London. Isleport Number One, in the Gulf Stream, was a popular week-end resort for jaded Gothamites, and Number Four supplied a similar rendezvous for the *élite* of the World's metropolis. Ample transportation facilities were provided by the Trans-Atlantic Airplane Service, Inc., which ran a daily line of planes, making the crossing between the hemispheres, in approximately the same time as that required by the earth for a single revolution about its axis. Additional passenger service was furnished between the metropolises and their nearest isleports by means of local planes, on a schedule adapted to meet the requirements of the season.



Threading their passage to the outskirts of the assembly, the man led the way, with the directness of familiarity, to a ramp at the edge of the landing deck, down the ramp, and through a garden of semi-tropical luxuriance.

The apartment which Holden and his traveling companion now entered, comprised a wing of the upper floor of the hotel. It had been designed and equipped for his personal requirements, and offered a quiet retreat for rest and study, far removed from the distractions which, since the materialization of his chimerical fantasy, had made life ashore a burdensome round of business and social engagements. Although featured in magazine and newspaper articles, as the wizard who had united the hemispheres, there were few indeed, who could boast of his personal acquaintance; fewer still, of his friendship. He had entered the lime-light of his brilliant career, a man of mystery, and was rapidly becoming a recluse. But on the isleport, he was a natural free man, unknown, save to the manager, who was under strict orders to preserve under all circumstances, the incognito of his illustrious guest.

Thus, it often happened, as on the present occasion, that Holden arrived on the isleport without even the manager being aware of his presence. Occasionally, he was accompanied by one or two guests, college friends of former years, or men well known

in the annals of science; but, for the most part, he loved to come alone, in order that he might be better able to concentrate on some of the baffling problems ever present to men of broad vision and mental resource.

The apartment provided, in addition to the library, three sleeping rooms, a kitchenette and pantry, which was kept well stocked with provisions replaced every week. Thus, he was enabled to slip quietly into the privacy of home life, or if he preferred, he could have his meals supplied in his own apartment through the Chief Steward, or in the more public dining rooms of the hotel. Life on the isleport, therefore, offered him the greatest range of freedom, and the opportunity to pursue any course of study or recreation to which he felt inclined.

TO account for the presence, on this occasion, of his female traveling companion, it is necessary to go back into the more recent years of Holden's life. At the time of the events herein set forth, he was a man in his early forties, possessing a well-built athletic figure, despite his height. He moved with a freedom which just fell short of smoothness, because of a certain decisiveness and alertness which made his actions unexpected, and, therefore, lacking in that finish commonly accorded to graceful movement. In his earlier career at college, he had taken an active part in the lighter forms of athletics, such as fencing and track, and then, with the advent of war, had plunged suddenly into arduous indoor labours over the draughting board and in the laboratory, with long hours of the most exacting mental drudgery and mathematical calculations, where a single slip might have meant the loss of many lives. And the war had exacted its toll, even as it did over millions of those who never saw the fighting front. The close of the war left him tired and worn, but the restlessness of the post war period had seized him, and he did not pause or relax. The vision of the floating isleports had firmly implanted itself in the fructifying soil of his mind, and his labours increased. Now with the materialization of the dream to which he had set himself, and which he had carried on by sheer force of will, there had come the warnings of a recalcitrant heart, occasional fainting spells, general lassitude, and physical inability to keep the pace that his ever active mind demanded. Immediately he had placed himself under the care of a specialist. The trouble had not become organic and might, under proper care and treatment over an extended period, entirely disappear. It was, therefore, by the orders of his physician, one Dr. Von Sturm, that he had accepted the constant attendance of the trained nurse which the doctor procured for him, and it was she, who accompanied him on his present sojourn.

Dr. Von Sturm, a man of international reputation in the treatment of cardiac diseases, had realized that the selection of a nurse for Bob Holden, was a matter requiring unusual consideration. He had studied Holden's eccentricities carefully and knew that his selection must be a woman who would combine unusual proficiency in her profession, with qualities of mind which would, whenever required, place her on a plane of companionship with the scientist. She must moreover be a lover of nature and outdoor life, and something more than a dub at golf, the only game in which Holden was allowed to participate. In searching through his files, he came across the record of one Kitty Cromwell, with copious notes on her character, life, and the ability she had displayed in the handling of several cases. She had been used by him on a number of occasions where linguistic attainments had been an important factor, for the doctor had a large foreign clientele. He sent for her, and after an hour's conversation, presented to her the details of the case. She was familiar with the newspaper accounts of Holden and his floating isleports, and was at once interested in the prospect of a position which, in addition to its peculiar character, offered unusually large lucrative inducements.

Kitty Cromwell had been in Holden's employ only a few months, and this was her first trip to the enchanted isles, about which she had read and heard so much. The trip on the giant aircraft, which had carried them steadier than an ocean liner, and swifter than a bird in flight, had been filled with excitement and interest, but upon their arrival in Holden's apartment, she succumbed to the feeling of restful languor that seemed a part of the place. Holden showed unmistakable signs of fatigue, so she suppressed her desire to explore the isleport—there would be days, possibly weeks, for that delightful occupation—and set herself about the work of making the place comfortable for her patient and herself.

The discovery of the well stocked larder coupled with the quiet homelike atmosphere of the surroundings, quickly led to the decision to prepare the evening meal herself rather than requisition the services of the hotel chef, as Holden had suggested; and she was soon busily engaged in the arts which are rapidly being relegated to the age of the unemancipated female.

The meal was soon served in the library, and seldom had Holden enjoyed a meal, at once so simple, and so wholesome. The long voyage through the early autumn air had whetted their appetites, and they ate with that freedom of appreciation, which distinguishes keen relish from aesthetic insouciance. As the last glow of the setting sun flooded the room, then quickly faded into the short autumn twilight, Holden switched on the light, and sinking into his easy chair, lighted his pipe and picked up a late magazine. In a short time, Miss Cromwell, too, sat down with a book she had selected from the shelves and listlessly perused the pages, but her mind drifted away on the currents and counter-currents of life, that had shaped her course into this haven of rest and peace. From far below, there came to them the rythmic swish and rush of the rollers, breaking through the bridge-work of the structure, and this constant repetition at regular intervals relaxed the tension of tired nerves, until the great outer world seemed to recede, leaving behind a feeling of isolation—a sense of being carried along on some wave of destiny out into the great adventurous unknown.

NEITHER one felt under necessity to make conversation, for during the few months of their association, there had come about a mutual feeling of freedom from the constraint, which too often blights companionship with the chit-chat of enforced conversation. But Holden finally looked up from an article he had been reading on "Our European Relations," and more to himself than to her, he said:

"This European turmoil seems to grow apace. No telling where it will end. If our country continues her demand for payment of war loans, it may mean the eventual bankruptcy of many European countries. We build a tariff wall around American industries to keep out European competition, and in so doing cut off one of their chief sources of revenue. They look upon us as a grasping creditor who, like Shylock, would extract the pound of flesh. A number of European countries have banded themselves together in an industrial boycott of all goods from the United

States. To add seriousness to the situation, immense sums of money, which our country claims should be used in payment of Europe's debts to us, are being expended in the interests of European military preparedness, and their development and production of airplanes has grown beyond all measure of industrial necessity. All wars of the past have had their roots in economic causes, and the present situation is, to say the least, pregnant with alarming possibilities. But still the United States sleeps, confident in her security as the world's banker. The law often contributes to the making of thieves and murderers, and we should not loose sight of the fact that a successful blow struck by our debtors would absolve them from their present obligations and, at the same time, place our immense wealth at their disposal."

"In case of trouble between Europe and the United States, what about these isleports?" she asked. "An air fleet such as Europe could mobilize, could easily seize them and make them a base for operations against America."

"Such an emergency has been provided for. Orders have been given to the resident engineer on each of the isleports that, in case of a declaration or any act of war against the United States, the sea-cocks are to be opened and the isleports sunk. You may know, or perhaps you don't, that these isleports are floated on long necked steel bottles. The bodies of these bottles are deep down in the ocean, below the level of surface disturbances. Waves affect the water under the surface less and less as the depth is greater. At a sufficient depth there is no effect. This keeps the isleports, to use a sailors' term, on even keel, and prevents their being tossed about on the waves like ships. This isleport rests upon the necks of ten thousand of these steel bottles, and the lower deck is a hundred and fifty feet above the bodies of the bottles. Inasmuch as the highest waves known in the Atlantic are about forty feet high, no storm however violent, can disturb the equilibrium of the decks. The bottles and their necks are bridged and stayed together in such a manner as to defy the shocks due to wind and wave.

"In the bottom of each bottle is, what is known as a seacock, which acts much like the stopper to an ordinary bottle, except that, in this case, the stopper is inside of the bottle. Each bottle is partly filled with sea-water and above the water, with air under pressure. The air is forced in by means of a series of large compressors. The bottle necks are connected on the lower deck level into pipe lines running to the compressors. In these pipe lines, each of which connects a group of the bottles, are air valves, by means of which the air can be let out. The air valves and the sea-cocks are opened or closed by motors. To lower the isleport, it is only necessary to open both the air-valves and the sea-cocks. As the water enters the bottles through the sea-cocks, the air is forced out through the valves. It would take seven or eight hours to sink this isleport, as it will float with only one third of the bottles in use. To raise the isleport higher out of the water, the sea-cocks are likewise opened, but the air-valves are closed, and the compressors are used to pump more air into the bottles, forcing the water out through the sea-cocks."

"But how," she queried, "are the isleports held in the same location? The ocean must be very deep here, too deep to anchor them by any ordinary means. Then too, the size of the isleport is such that the pull on an anchor would be almost certain to shift it."

"That is a matter," he replied, "which occasioned some months of engineering work and presented great difficulties. It finally resulted, however, in anchoring each isleport by means of three cables. Each of these cables is approximately three times as long as the ocean is deep, and is of such size that alone it will withstand the total pull of the isleport. The anchor is shaped like a clamshell and lies on the bottom of the ocean in such a manner that the edge of the shell sinks into the mud. The anchors are so positioned that the cables attached to them converge on a central point. Near to this center the cables rise from the ocean bed to a floating buoy, of a size sufficient to carry the combined weight of the cables. This buoy is attached by a short cable to the center of the long side of the isleport; the buoy prevents the weight of the cables from dragging down on the side of the isleport and careening the structure, and also allows it to swing in such a manner as to always bring the long side to face the wind."

"Why the long side?" she asked, "It would seem better to have the short side facing the wind."

"That is due to certain requirements of our power equipment which I will show you later. Moreover, the hotel runs transversely across the isleport and presents its longest side toward the ends of the isleport. The resistance from either side is, therefore, approximately equal. The pull of the structure on the cables may either be all on one cable, or may be distributed on any two of them, depending on the direction of the wind. As the isleport pulls on these cables, they are lifted from the ocean bed in a curved line, but, in any case, there will be some miles of cable lying down in the mud of the bottom. This makes the pull on the anchor horizontal, and in order to shift it, several miles of cable would have to be pulled with it."

"But," she hazarded, "wars do not come over night and foreseeing such an event, the isleports might be towed back to America and saved. The destruction of such a wonderful work should be resorted to only as an absolute necessity."

HE shook his head slowly as he said: "No, I fear that there is no such assurance. The next war will come practically unheralded. It is even possible, that actual hostilities may precede any formal declaration of intentions. Japan did not declare war against Russia—she struck first. Germany overrode all peace overtures by starting her march through Belgium. Moreover, it would take months to tow such an unwieldly craft to our shores without injury. It took eight weeks to anchor this one in its present position, even though the flow of the Gulf Stream was in our favor. No, war is war, and by its very nature, it is a destroyer. But, much as I would hate to have them sunk, it would be far better than to have them fall into the hands of an enemy, who would use them as a means of attacking our country."

"It seems incredible," she replied, "that nations would again plunge the world into war. Will they never learn that war is no solution of their problems, that it is a test of might and not of right, and that in the long run, industrial and not military supremacy, is the real indicator of a nation's might? Why must the justness of a cause be forever dependent upon the power to kill? Have you men of science no panacea to offer?"

"I am convinced that the only thing that will bring an end to wars, is the discovery of some super-power of destruction which will be held in secret by a nation or an individual, and used only to checkmate any warlike disposition. A single man," he continued, "may at some not far distant day, hold the fate of the world in his hands. This may come about in any one of a number of ways. A new metal as light as aluminum, yet with a tensile strength many times that of steel would make it possible to armour airships as

we now do naval vessels, and equip them with long range guns; a means of sending electric power through the air as we now send radio waves, and yet concentrate such power in any given direction; the discovery of a new ray that will counter-act cohesion in matter; or the harnessing of atomic energy; any one of these might make war impossible. It would be fortunate for the world, if such a discovery came to one who would use it in the interests of world peace; it would be disastrous, were it to be used for selfish ends or national aggrandizement."

During the few months of their acquaintance, she had never heard him talk so freely. She had had a glimpse of the real man that lay concealed beneath the cold and exact scientist, and the view was humanized and drew her to him. She was deeply interested in this new aspect of one whom the world denoted as a man of mystery, and she knew now, that the world had never known him. He was a scientist, but, beneath it all he was a man—one who would use his brilliant mind for the betterment of humanity. The question as to whether he might be working toward some one of the ends he had indicated, came half formed into her mind, but she gave it no utterance.

The silence that had followed his last remarks was broken only by the low muffled swish-swish of the waves breaking through the steel structure, and now and then, when an outer door was opened in the hotel below, a momentary strain of music floated up to them from the orchestra in the dancing hall.

Holden mused, talking in low tones as if half to himself, his train of thought taking its cue partly from the thought he had last expressed, and partly from the sound of the waves in the ocean below. "Funny thing waves—the hallmark of universal energy—always in motion. That old Greek knew a thing or two when he postulated motion as the essence of all being. Ocean waves, atmospheric waves, ether waves, even the atoms in steel vibrating rythmically. We humans with our puny sense organs, catch a few of them and think that we know the universe. They impact upon our sense organs and those coming at a rate of from thirty to ten thousand per second, set up vibrations in the ear. We hear these and call the waves sound waves. When they come at the rate of two hundred and fifty-six per second, we name that sound "middle C" on the musical scale. Down in the ocean the fish are equipped with an organ for interpreting wave velocities far below our range of hearing. What is their interpretation? Not sound, nor color, but something pleasant when it sends them in pursuit of food, and unpleasant when they are pursued. Probably if the fish thinks at all, he believes that he knows the world through his sense impressions. Yet fish have no sense organs for the interpretation of atmospheric waves, and our own ability to receive and interpret ether waves is but little in advance of that of the fish when one considers the immense range of wave velocities which we have no sense organ to interpret. Thus, waves from ten thousand to three hundred million millions per second are all lost to us. From that point to seven hundred million millions is the range of heat and light waves. Above that again, is the ultra violet range, which is beyond the reach of any of our sense organs. Though we had a hundred times our five senses, with which mankind is usually accredited, we would still not know our universe. Sir John Lubbock, that brilliant student of ants, bees and wasps, demonstrated by more than a hundred tests, that ants see ultra-violet rays which are beyond our range of vision. Back in the early ages of the human race, the range of color vision was much more limited than it is at present. It was William E. Gladstone who, although a noted opponent of evolution, first broached the idea that the Greeks of Homer's day did not see the higher colors of the spectrum such as green, blue, and violet. The sky for them, was steel gray, and they had no words in their language for green or blue. Moreover, in recent years, certain races in the Phillipines have been found who have no perception for these higher colors, such colors being seen only as shades of gray, or in the black and white tones of a photograph. The race has at least doubled its range of color vision during the period of written history, and we may even look forward to the time when we shall have advanced to the ant stage; but, in any case, there will always be an infinite range of waves beyond our ken."

He reached to the table, touched a button, and slowly turned a dial, and through the room there floated music from an orchestra in Boston. "Waves," he continued, "just waves; harmonized in a hall in Boston, then raised into the range between sound and sight, where there is no sense organ that can interpret them. These shorter waves travel faster and farther, and are finally transferred back into the range of hearing by this receiver.

"The interpretation and control of ether waves, is the key to Utopia, and we are standing on the threshhold. Some day the door will be opened; some one will find the key that will unlock it; and in that day, the science that now is, will appear to us as the child who builds his world from a sand pile and a few blocks of wood."

Kitty Cromwell knew that a prophet had spoken, yet it all seemed so simple, so easy to understand. His sureness of himself and of the matters about which he talked, carried conviction. They were not the untried hypotheses of a fanatical dreamer, but the simple facts of scientific achievement reaching out its hand into the future; a philosophy that would germinate into scientific activity, and endow the world with its fruits. Intuitively, she felt that the trend of his present investigation and experiments, the work which he had come here to complete, was in an intricate way connected with the two leading thoughts of his discussion; war and ether waves. She recalled his words:

"I am convinced that the only thing that will bring an end to war is the discovery of some super-power of destruction, which will be held in secret by a nation or an individual, and used only to checkmate any warlike disposition."

As she arose and bade him good night, there came to her the desire to express her new found faith in him and the work to which, she now felt certain, he had committed himself, and to pledge to him her own support and help. But then there came the realization, that he had no need for such poor help as she could offer. He was self sufficient for any work he had planned.

Holden sat smoking his pipe, for a long time after she had gone. It was seldom that he had found anyone to whom he could express himself so freely, and it was always a satisfaction to him when he could talk about the broader aspects of his work. For it is a paramount necessity to one engrossed in the development of any important project, that the basic principles shall not be lost to view in the maze of details, and the general truths he had just reviewed, found their clearest expression in conversation with an appreciative listener. Finally he rose from his chair and went to his room.

Both were fatigued by their long trip, and under the spell of the ocean and the song of the waves, were soon lost in sleep. But neither dreamed of the messages which, while they slept, were flying through the

ether, nor of the mysterious adventures upon which they had already embarked.

CHAPTER II

The Enchanted Isle

THERE is abundant evidence, that in the dim and distant prehistoric ages, the contours of the Eastern and Western Hemispheres differed widely from those of modern times. The discussion of these important geographical differences, however, must be left to those modern savants who, while differing as to the details, have arrived at a fairly uniform consensus of opinion respecting some of the greater changes involved. Thus, it is fairly well established that in those remote times, before man had become an upright animal, physically speaking, the continent of Europe extended westward to a line known as the Atlantic Shelf, many miles to the West of the present coast lines of Ireland and Spain. The British Isles were at that time a part of continental Europe. The English Channel would have presented no such challenge to the daring and endurance of swimmers as at the present day, for its bed was a beautiful valley through which the Seine and the Thames flowed westward to the ocean. The Mediterranean was a system of two inland seas, separated by the isthmus, the northern part of which is now known as Italy, which united the northern coast of Africa with the southern part of Europe.

Whence the Legend of Atlantis originated is unknown, for legend is as old as language itself, while its fair daughter, history, is a twin to the graphic art. But long before the first crude ideographs were cut on wood bark or chiselled in stone, the great continental changes that made Britain an island, and caused the Mediterranean to flow westward through the Pillars of Hercules into the Atlantic, had taken place. The human race was cradled in the East, but its march wes ever westward. Westward lay the unknown, and to minds impregnated with the raw materials of imagination, the unknown was the land of golden opportunity. As the centuries rolled on, this westward migration fringed the shores of the Mediterranean and spread North and South along the western coasts of Europe; and it was but natural to this hardy race of adventurers, that, as they gathered about their campfires in cave and hut, the thought that the sea, which beat upon their own rocky coasts, must likewise wash the gravelly beach of an opposite shore, became the subject of their conversation and their dreams.

The Legend of Atlantis was first recorded by Plato, who had received it from certain Egyptian priests. According to these priests, Atlantis was a continent of considerable size, many days' voyage to the West of the Pillars of Hercules. Ten thousand years before the Christian Era, it had been a powerful kingdom, and its armies had overrun the lands which bordered the Mediterranean. It is not surprising, therefore; that in the minds of ancient mariners, the westward ocean cradled a Utopia which offered to them the fulfillment of their wildest dreams of adventure or avarice. This fabled land offered all that the heart could desire, its climate was warmed by favoring breezes and warm ocean currents; its rich vegetation supplied food in plenty without the necessity of cultivation; its waters flowed in crystal clear streams which defied the ravages of age and made sickness a thing unknown; and its inhabitants were adorned with pearls of a size and opalescence exceeding any ever seen.

This idea like those of Paradise, Heaven, Nirvana, or the Elysian Fields, may have been nurtured by the desire that has ever animated the mind of man with the hope of perfection, here or hereafter. But, whatever its source, certain it is that the idea was the mainspring of many voyages of discovery, and we may not be too certain that the adventurous spirits of Columbus and Vespucci were not more concentrated in the hope of discovery of the lost Atlantis, than by the more mercantile pursuit of a shorter passage to India. Nor has this ancient conceit lost any of its allurement before the modern advances of science, for ever and anon this legendary lost continent becomes directly or indirectly, the object of oceanographic research. Countless expeditions have made its discovery their objective, and have, for the most part, become entangled in that great floating mass of seaweed, thrown centripetally inward by the North Atlantic Eddy, and known as the Sargasso Sea.

On that September afternoon, in which the events of this story begin, Isleport Number Two might well have been that fabled Atlantis which attracted the ancient mind with its illusions of an earthly paradise, as its waving palms and emerald-hued verdure caught the glint of the rays from the setting sun, and flung them back, glowing with golden green, to form a jeweled mosaic against the background of ocean blue which was broken into lines and facets by white feather tipped runners.

STRUCTURALLY, the isleport might have been likened to a gigantic airplane, a quintoplane, with wings more than half a mile in length. But the similarity was only in its structural outline, for in place of the fuselage was an eight story hotel, and the wings, instead of being designed to lift and sustain a plane in flight, were in reality five great decks which converted the isleport into a country club with some four hundred acres of grounds, offering unparelleled facilities for recreation. These great wings or decks were covered with soil from one to four feet in depth, in which grew trees, shrubbery and flowers, and over its undulating surface was a velvety carpet of grass offering many enticing banks for repose. Gravel walks wound in and out amidst the semi-tropical shrubbery, while canaries, mocking birds, parrots, macaws, and a variety of bright plumaged birds flitted about freely among the branches of the trees, content to remain in the unmolested security of this island paradise.

In nautical parlance, Isleport Number Two was situated in Lat. 38°-20′, and Long. 51°-38′ West; and was in direct line between New York and the Azores, approximately twelve hundred miles from each. It was, therefore, in the path of the North Atlantic Eddy, which takes its eastward movement from the current friction of the Gulf Stream a hundred miles or so, to the North of the isleport. Some four hundred miles to the South of it, was that mass of seaweed thrown out by the motion of the Eddy, known as the Sargasso Sea. The location, therefore, was one calculated to suggest the analogy with that land of ancient lore, supposed now to lie at the bottom of the ocean. But this resemblance to its ancient prototype, carried a deeper significance, for as the legend of the lost Atlantis provided for the ancients the allurement of a new destiny which led them to progress and discovery; so was this modern antitype destined to mark a new stage in human progress, the beginning of a new voyage of discovery in the furtherance of international peace and concord.

Guests arriving at the isleport by airplane, alighted on a vast level field which constituted the upper landing deck. From this deck, they were conducted down a long inclined ramp to the fourth deck, known as the Palm Garden. Here they entered the hotel at the

seventh floor and descended by elevator to the third floor, on which the offices were located. There were two floors of the hotel to each outer deck, and the office floor was, therefore, on the same level as the second deck. In addition to the offices, the third floor of the hotel included the main dining room, theatre, music room, and a large open foyer which offered the facilities of a general assembly and lounging room, and gave access to reading and writing rooms on the same level. The fourth story was provided with an inner court or mezzanine, which looked down into the foyer on the floor below. Beneath the office floor on the second level, were grill room, reading room, smoking and game rooms; while the first floor contained a large bathing pool, the tank being underslung beneath the level of the first deck.

The lower deck of the isleport, was used for engineering purposes. It provided extensive machine shops for the repair of planes and for general attention to the mechanical equipment of the isleport. On this deck, the hotel expanded into two lateral wings housing the shops, pumps, compressors and generators which furnished power, light and heat. Outside of these wings, were stored a number of lifeboats and seagoing motor launches, which were kept equipped and provisioned at all times for emergency.

The second deck provided a nine hole golf course. Number One Tee was located near to the front end of the hotel and the fairway extended toward the far end of the deck but bore slightly inward. About fifty yards from this tee, a ravine dipped down some twenty feet toward the lower deck. The sides of this ravine were dotted with outcropping rock ledges, and a drive from the first tee must needs be well over a hundred and fifty yards in order to safely cross this hazard. The course was covered with grass, while bushes, trees and shrubbery were skillfully arranged to provide plenty of rough ground. The supporting columns of the structure offered many obstacles to the balls and made straight driving essential. On the opposite end of the isleport, beyond where the fifth fairway dog-legged around the rear end of the hotel, an artificial lake, some eighty yards across, provided a water hazard. This lake was dotted with pond lilies and surrounded with bushes and rough ground, and the approach to the fifth green was directly across it. The links offered bunkers, sand traps, and all the paraphernalia of a golfer's paradise, laid out with such consummate skill and wealth of engineering and landscape gardening that the course carried the conviction of a natural stretch of terra firma, with no suggestion that earth, trees and lakes were sustained in mid-air by means of a steel structure. The holes ranged from a hundred and fifty to three hundred and fifty yards; not long holes for the most part, but beset with difficulties far greater than those usually encountered.

The space between decks was thirty feet on the average, but, for structural purposes, this height was not uniform. There were sections where it reached forty feet in height, due to the fact that the decks were stepped up or down in order to provide for more adequate bracing and bridging; and the layout of the course had been skillfully arranged to take advantage of this variation in height in such a manner as to give greater room for the ordinary trajectory of the balls. At those sides where the fairways paralleled the outer edges of the structure, a wall of wire netting prevented the loss of balls in the ocean. The light between the decks was excellent and uniform, owing to the fact that on the ocean, light is reflected from the facets of the waves at every possible angle. It permeated between the decks giving light of great strength and power, yet without the blinding glare of sunlight. The effect would have been impossible anywhere except upon the ocean.

The third deck was equipped with tennis courts, a children's playground, and an outdoor gymnasium. Here the guests could receive instruction in fencing, or could play shuffleboard, or various other games in which they might wish to indulge. Around the outside of the isleport on this level, was a wide walk, covering a distance of a mile and a half in the circuit. The various branches of athletics and recreation were in charge of a corps of instructors, who looked after the physical well-being of the guests, and gave special instruction in any sports desired.

The fourth deck was, as previously noted, the Palm Garden, and in its presence, the renowned Hanging Gardens of Babylon must have been dimmed, if not eclipsed, by the greater luxuriance of the semi-tropical verdure. In some subtle manner, the palm has become the symbol of ease and luxury—of a life that may be lived without effort. We associate its presence with tropical countries, where life runs smoothly along the even tenor of its way, unmoved by the struggle for existences, which is accelerated in proportion to the rigors of the climate. But, the presence of the palm has contributed to the ease of this struggle, rather than derived its associations from it, in those parts of the earth to whose soil it is indigenous. In a general way, it might be said that, were all other vegetation destroyed, those countries which include the palm in their flora, could obtain from its various species, all the necessities of life. Some eight hundred uses have been catalogued for the Palmyra Palm found in India and Ceylon. From the fruit of the cocoanut and date palms, may be obtained food, milk, butter and oil. The sap produces jaggery, a kind of sugar, or it may be fermented to make wine and arrack; or again, it may be made into soap, candles, or wax. From the cocoanut shell are made cups and bowls, while in some localities, the spines from the leaves are used for arrow and spear tips. The wood is used for furniture and takes a beautiful polish, and the leaves are used for thatch, rugs, writing paper and ropes.

HOWEVER, it was not with a view to any of these specific uses, that the palm had been introduced by Holden, into the plans for his floating isleports, but rather that they might bring from their native habitat something of that peace and restfulness, which is manifested in the lives of those whose lot is cast within their graceful shadows. The temperature of Atlantis, ranging between 65° and 80° F., was well adapted to the growth of many of the more than a thousand species of this family, and from these a score or more of varieties had been selected. There were heavy bodied Acrocomias, with their ringed columns surmounted with crowns of feathery plumage, mingled with the more slender stemmed Kentias, some of the latter resembling the rush-like bamboo. There were Seaforthias from New South Wales, with buttressed bases and straight columns rising fifteen or twenty feet in the air and surmounted by flat, wide spreading tops. Then there were the Attaleas or Oil Palms, which produce a finer grade of oil than the Cocoanut; the Howeas resembling the Kentias and used for thatch; and the low Ornamental Date Palms. The Latanias or Bourbon Palms with their fan-like leaves, were not so suitable for the rough treatment of the Atlantic breezes as the pinnate leaved varieties. The taller genuses were, of necessity, omitted on account of the limitations imposed by the landing deck, though there were some which towered from thirty to forty feet between decks; and a few of greater height were planted near to the edge of the Garden, with their bodies inclined

outward in such a manner as to pass outside of the landing deck, their tufted crowns rising high above the isleport. All of the trees were braced to the structure to secure them against the effect of wind and storm.

It would be a mistake, however, to infer that palms were the only family of plant life which adorned the Palm Garden. The walks were bordered with ferns, almost infinite in their variety, while here and there were scattered a few of the delicate feathery mimosas. The structural columns, beams and braces were festooned with running varieties of the palm, and with the Bougainvillea vine whose large clusters of flowers surrounded by their deep rose colored bracts, added a fascinating touch of color to the green of the palms.

Throughout the Garden, the paths were widened in sheltered places to give room for small tables and steamer chairs, and, on pleasant days, many guests were wont to lunch here under the magic spell of rustling leaves and the songs of the birds. Here also came the artist to paint, the author to write, and the book-lover to read amid the twin charms of ocean and forest. In the center of a broad plaza fronting the hotel, a fountain played into a marble rimmed basin, and from its overflow a running brook trickled in a winding course throughout the length of the Garden, now losing itself beneath overhanging shrubbery, then coursing over rocks and beneath fantastic bridges; while here and there it widened to form alabaster pools which caught the reflection of the graceful lanceolate leaves as they swayed to and fro in the gentle breezes.

Sunrise and sunset from the Palm Garden was a sight never to be forgotten; changeable through all combinations of color and mutations of cloud and mist, the great luminary rose, sometimes scintillating, or again refulgent in the red robes of matutinal birth; darting its horizontal rays through the leafy paradise and turning each leaf to gold. Or setting in a bank of brilliant cerise, flaunting its long streamers across the heavens, then suddenly dropping from sight behind the horizon of troubled white-capped waves, it presented a symphony of colors beyond power of description. Then the afterglow, never twice alike, changing from moment to moment and as it changed, tinting the crests of the rollers with red, purple, mauve, pink or gold; the clouds above meanwhile assuming fantastic shapes, their edges fringed with the colors reflected on the waves. To an observer standing among the palms and looking out through their arching gracefulness, the sight was calculated to inspire with the romance of color the sentient artistry that lies deep in the roots of every soul.

But one cannot linger too long amidst the beauties of this resort, without giving some consideration to the elaborate means that had been provided to meet the various demands of such a haven far removed from the ordinary sources of power, which have become an integral part of our modern life. The meeting of these demands had been accomplished only through feats of engineering that would have daunted a less indefatigable worker than Bob Holden. The isleport needed power for its compressors, pumps and generators for light and heat, and he had wrested it from wind and wave. Beneath the lower deck was an elaborate system of tubes running transversely across the structure. These tubes caught the wind and, as it whirled through the long passages, it revolved the turbines which drove the generators and converted the power of the winds into electric energy.

A similar series of tubes beneath the surface of the ocean, utilized the motion of the waves for the same purpose, while storage batteries took up the excess energy and held it, in order that it might be utilized in time of calm, in much the same manner as that of the storage battery in an automobile.

The water system of the isleport was threefold. Salt water was pumped from deep down in the ocean, passed through filters and offered for use in the baths and swimming pool. Rain water was collected by gutters from the vast field of the upper landing deck, and conducted through filters into large storage tanks which were suspended in the bottle bridge work well down beneath the surface to avoid the necessity of carrying their weight above the water. From these tanks the water was lifted by air pressure to laundry and bath and also for use in the fountain and gardens. Drinking water was supplied from the mainland by means of a specially constructed tank boat, and was kept cold in a tank also submerged deep in the ocean. Arrangements were further provided for the distillation of water for drinking purposes, in case of necessity. The rain was another reliance.

THE hotel extended transversely across the center of the isleport, although its length was less by some two hundred feet, than the width of the decks. The front end of the hotel was pointed like the bow of a boat so that, with the isleport anchored to the buoy in the center of its long side, this bow-shaped end faced the wind. This arrangement served to greatly lessen the wind resistance of the structure and at the same time, the power tubes extending transversely across the structure beneath the lower deck, were held in the position of greatest efficiency.

The eighth floor of the hotel at the front end, extended out over the fourth deck, leaving beneath it a broad passage which connected the Palm Garden on either side of the hotel. This overhanging floor comprised the laboratories of Bob Holden, and beneath its jutting eaves, was the outer door, through which he had passed when he entered with Miss Cromwell on the night of their arrival. At the extreme outer end of this over-hanging structure, was a circular room built of steel plate and containing no windows, and this room was surmounted by a semi-spherical dome above the level of the landing deck, which gave to it the appearance of an astronomical observatory. Its outer walls were covered with clematis and Bougainvillea vines, which gave to it something of the appearance of a turreted castle and added much to the beauty of the Garden.

Travellers, who had stopped at the other isleports of the Trans-Atlantic Airplane Service, Inc., had noted that Isleport Number Two alone possessed an observatory, and among the guests, the subject provided the ground work for many queer surmises. Gradually, this circular room had gathered about it an air of mystery enhanced by that type of romantic fiction which, at least, serves the purpose of a mental gymnasium for the otherwise masterful inactivity of the social gossip.

One woman frequenter of the resort had learned through a cousin in Washington, that this room had been provided by the United States Hydrographic Office for the purposes of investigation, but had never been used owing to lack of appropriations. Another was author of the report that it had been built by a retired scientist who held large stock interests in the company, but that he had died before the isleports were formally opened, and that the room had never been used. Many other fantastic stories were in circulation, but only a few of the more astute visitors persisted in linking the name of Bob Holden with the mystery. Inasmuch, however, as no one had ever known of Holden's visits to the isleport, this report like the others lacked verification.

The financing of the enterprise had not been the difficult task that Holden had at first expected. As early as May, 1927, Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh had made the first non-stop flight from New York to Paris. In his report of this flight, Colonel Lindbergh had pointed out that any attempt at regular trans-Atlantic passenger service by airplane would require a system of weather observation stations and water stations along the route. His daring single handed flight had given a great impetus to the project for a regular passenger service. But it was universally admitted by aviators that this would not be realized until a system of mid-ocean roadsteads was established. Such a system would solve the difficult problem of fuel carriage which, otherwise, presented one of the greatest difficulties. Moreover, the cost of such a system would not be prohibitive. Some two or three of the existing trans-Atlantic steamship lines together represented a capital outlay equal to that demanded by the entire isleport system, and it was rightly reasoned that such a system, with the many advantages offered to the traveller, would soon exercise a virtual monopoly in the passenger carrying business. Isleport Number One had first been constructed and operated for a season as a week-end resort, and had effectually demonstrated the feasibility of the enterprise. Within a few months after the opening of the system, every European steamship line had been compelled to drop all first class classification and lower their rates in order to remain in business; and some lines had dropped the passenger service entirely and were handling freight only. The financial side of the venture was therefore a success from the beginning. The second year had seen the service doubled, and the Stock Market had experienced many an anxious day, as a result of this enterprise.

The success of the venture, however, was dependent upon the man who had first conceived the plan. A less thorough investigator must surely have overlooked some important detail; a less indefatigable worker would have succumbed early in its development, to the difficulties to be surmounted. But Bob Holden never faltered, never lost faith in the enterprise nor in his ability to make it a success. He had personally checked all calculations and supervised all drawings; had handled the purchase of materials, organized a corps of marine engineers, draughtsmen and material inspectors, and provided means for the testing of each part of the equipment before it was assembled into the structure. The isleports had been assembled in the deep waters of Hampton Roads, by means of specially designed floating docks.

The problem of towing the isleports to their various destinations had been one of unimaginable difficulties. They could not be moved through the waters at an average rate exceeding two miles an hour. Storms and currents had to be taken into consideration. No towing company was equipped for the extraordinary venture and no marine insurance would underwrite the risk. Six tugs had been constructed for the purpose, wide of beam and equipped with high powered, low speed Diesel engines. But the question of carrying fuel for the long journey, was one which threatened for a time, to prove the nemesis of the undertaking. Finally it was decided on Holden's suggestion, to tow the isleports into the Gulf Stream, then to drift with the current to the point nearest their final destination, thus conserving fuel. Finally, they would be towed from such a point to their final destination. Thus, it was due to the extraordinary completeness of the plans in every detail, and the provisions made to meet every emergency, that this greatest engineering feat of all times was made possible.

Each isleport had finally been anchored in its prearranged position without mishap, and tonight the builder of dreams slept peacefully on his own materialization: slept as Orion and the Pleiades and the Milky Way passed in succession over his head, and as the sun arose and the smoke curled upward from the campfires of Thibet and Afganistan, and from the chimneys of Eastern, Middle and Western Europe: slept, as the sun shot its slanting rays through the Palm Garden of Isleport Number Two, and rose higher and higher into the sky; slept, until the rattle and roar of the subways of New York carried their millions of cliff-dwellers downtown into the maelstrom of business: slept, while the news-boys on the corners loudly cried from their extras, the headlines, which brought consternation to the Western World.

CHAPTER III.

Robinson Crusoe

WHEN Holden retired on the night of his arrival at Isleport Number Two, he had decided upon a few days of absolute rest. After that he would begin certain experiments on the problem which had, for some time, been engrossing all his attention and interest. Accordingly, he did not awake on the following morning until the sun was nearing its zenith. As he looked from his window he noted that the palms were casting short shadows in the Garden, and a noontime quiet pervaded the place. Slipping quickly into his bath, he whistled an aria from the opera that had come over the air the previous night. He was cheerful and happy as he heard Miss Cromwell moving about the library, and caught the appetizing aroma of coffee coming through the open transom.

He emerged from his room, clad in a neat gray sport suit, and was greeted cheerfully by Kitty Cromwell who wore, however, a puzzled expression as she said:

"I tried for ten minutes to call up the Chief Steward and have breakfast sent up, but could get no answer, so I have prepared a light breakfast."

He crossed the room, picked up the receiver, and slowly worked the hook up and down. The telephone was apparently dead. "Must be a defective connection," he said, "but it's too late for breakfast in the hotel anyway and after we have finished, I'll attend to the telephone and we can lunch there later."

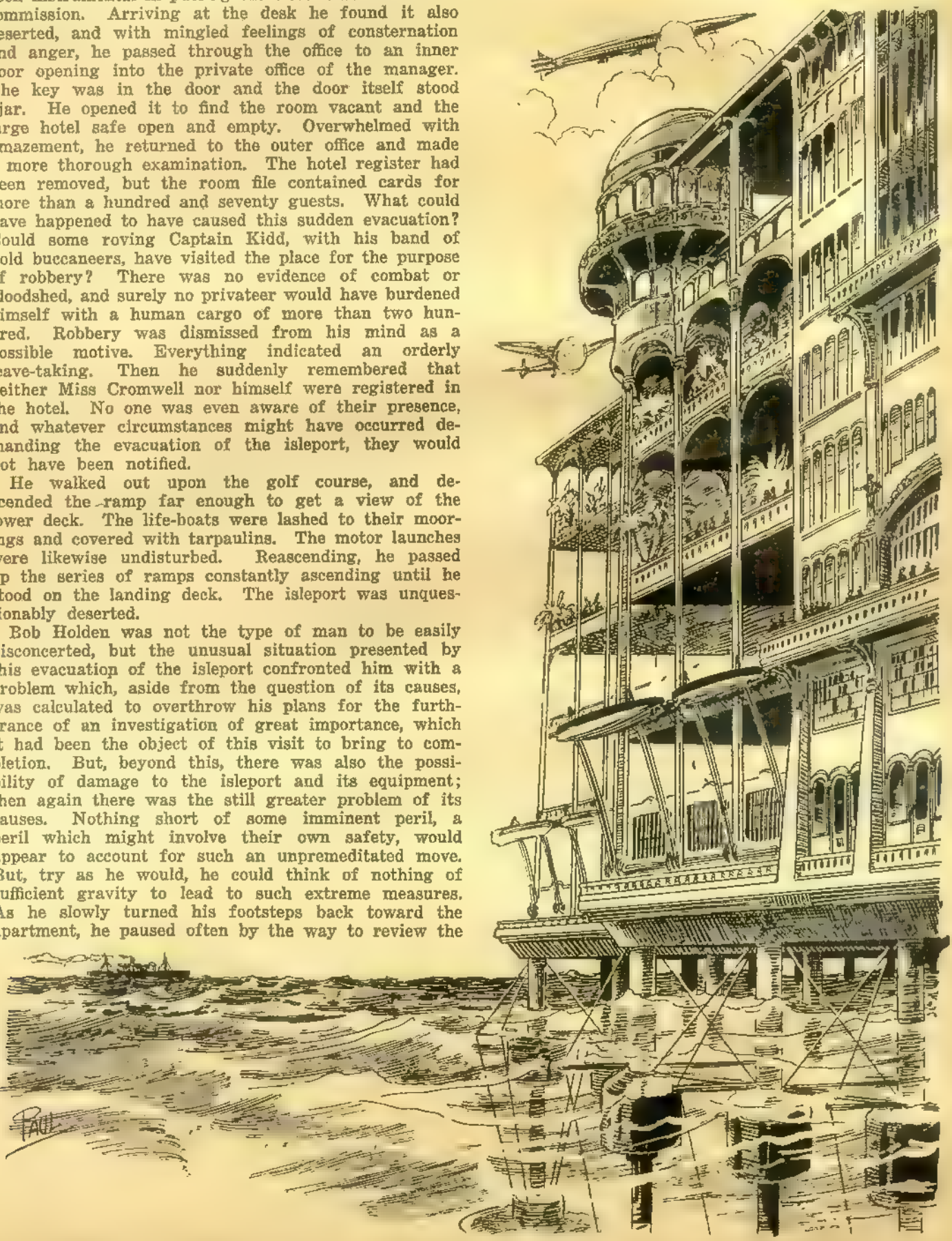
Holden opened the long windows overlooking the Palm Garden and they enjoyed their grapefruit, coffee and toast, as the gentle but invigorating September breeze blew softly through the room. Occasionally, the chirrup of a bird mingled with the song of the surf to break the noonday hush, and they spoke but seldom, yielding themselves to the serenity with which nature had enveloped the place.

Breakfast over, Holden arose and went out into the passage. At the far end was a door leading into the main hallway of the hotel. This was kept locked, but he produced a pass key and opened it, and was soon standing before the elevator shaft. He pushed the button and waited, but there was no response—no sound of the moving cage nor flashing of the indicator bulbs. He pushed the button again and again but with like results, so he was finally compelled to walk down the five flights to the office floor. At the fourth floor he turned aside and walked out onto the mezzanine where he could look down into the foyer below. Open books, magazines and newspapers lay scattered about on tables and chairs, giving to the place a rather disordered appearance, but not a person was in sight. This absence of people puzzled him, until he reflected that it was nearly time for the express plane from Europe, and the people would naturally have gathered

on the landing deck. With the disabled telephone and the absence of elevator service on his mind, he descended the remaining flight to the offices. This laxity in service demanded that a severe reprimand be given the manager, unless some unforeseen circumstance had been instrumental in putting the electric service out of commission. Arriving at the desk he found it also deserted, and with mingled feelings of consternation and anger, he passed through the office to an inner door opening into the private office of the manager. The key was in the door and the door itself stood ajar. He opened it to find the room vacant and the large hotel safe open and empty. Overwhelmed with amazement, he returned to the outer office and made a more thorough examination. The hotel register had been removed, but the room file contained cards for more than a hundred and seventy guests. What could have happened to have caused this sudden evacuation? Could some roving Captain Kidd, with his band of bold buccaneers, have visited the place for the purpose of robbery? There was no evidence of combat or bloodshed, and surely no privateer would have burdened himself with a human cargo of more than two hundred. Robbery was dismissed from his mind as a possible motive. Everything indicated an orderly leave-taking. Then he suddenly remembered that neither Miss Cromwell nor himself were registered in the hotel. No one was even aware of their presence, and whatever circumstances might have occurred demanding the evacuation of the isleport, they would not have been notified.

He walked out upon the golf course, and descended the ramp far enough to get a view of the lower deck. The life-boats were lashed to their moorings and covered with tarpaulins. The motor launches were likewise undisturbed. Reascending, he passed up the series of ramps constantly ascending until he stood on the landing deck. The isleport was unquestionably deserted.

Bob Holden was not the type of man to be easily disconcerted, but the unusual situation presented by this evacuation of the isleport confronted him with a problem which, aside from the question of its causes, was calculated to overthrow his plans for the furtherance of an investigation of great importance, which it had been the object of this visit to bring to completion. But, beyond this, there was also the possibility of damage to the isleport and its equipment; then again there was the still greater problem of its causes. Nothing short of some imminent peril, a peril which might involve their own safety, would appear to account for such an unpremeditated move. But, try as he would, he could think of nothing of sufficient gravity to lead to such extreme measures. As he slowly turned his footsteps back toward the apartment, he paused often by the way to review the various aspects of the incomprehensible situation. He wondered whether the other isleports had been similarly vacated. Then his thoughts turned to Kitty Cromwell, and the strange turn of events that had led to their being marooned here together. While it



At the outer end of this overhanging structure, was a circular room built of steel plate and containing no windows, and this room was surmounted by a semi-spherical dome above the level of the landing deck, which gave to it the appearance of an astronomical observatory.

was true they were not shipwrecked, nor could the isleport be called a desert island, save for the absence of other human beings, yet, in the main, they were left in that situation, which from the dawn of literature, has occupied the minds of writers of fiction. His thoughts finally led him to the decision to get into communication with his office in New York and, even though he should feel the necessity of himself remaining on the isleport, he would provide means for her return.

As he opened the door to his library, he met Kitty Cromwell on the point of leaving in search of him. She had spent an anxious hour waiting for his return, and was beginning to sense the occurrence of some unusual event or possibly an accident. His expression as he crossed the room and beckoned her to be seated, added an intangible air of mystery to the growing enigma.

"Guess we are selected as the principals in a modern version of Crusoe," he said, "Our fairy island, save for our own presence, is suddenly and unaccountably deserted,—not even a footprint to indicate the presence of man Friday."

"Deserted," she repeated, "but how,—last night, did you not see the crowd on the landing deck?"

He nodded with an enigmatic smile as if almost doubting the evidence of his own senses, as he replied, "Yes, but all have disappeared in a single night. All are gone. We alone are left."

She had arisen and stood before him now, unable to grasp the full meaning of what he had said. "It is a joke. You are trying to tease me. Some of your friends are playing a joke on us—on you," she corrected. To all of which he shook his head and she knew by his demeanor the truth of the thing he had stated. "Something has occurred," he resumed, "to cause the sudden evacuation of the isleport and our presence here not being known to the office, we were naturally not notified. I am sorry to have been instrumental in bringing about such a state of affairs. I should have notified the office immediately upon our arrival, instead of following my usual course on coming here."

SHE stepped swiftly across to the table and turned the dial of the radio, but no sound came from it. Her action, however, brought back to him his previous decision to get in touch with his office, and quickly arising from his chair, he took her by the arm and led her out into the passage, down the stairs, and around the hotel to the radiotelegraph room. Finding the door unlocked, they entered and Holden seated himself in the operator's chair. He adjusted the head-phones to his ears and rapidly turned switches and dials to see what might be on the air. At first there was no response, and he was about to take the key and call his office code signal, when there came a faint whistle which, in response to his tuning, quickly resolved itself into the dots and dashes of the Continental Code. He sat quietly before the instrument for fifteen or twenty minutes, then as the signals died, he opened the antennae switch and facing Kitty Cromwell, said.

"It has come. The thing we talked about last night. The European Alliance consisting of eight nations, has prepared to strike a crushing blow against the United States. I could not get full particulars. The message was sent from London by the International Wireless News Association. It appears that a council was held in Vienna yesterday and lasted far into the night. England was invited to join the Alliance but refused. She has now been offered along with other European non-members, freedom from molestation as a recompense for their neutrality. France has accepted and England will probably do likewise. Her Council of State is still in session and can hardly do otherwise. United States diplomatic officials have been handed their passports and have left the European capitals for England. The United States Ambassador to England has communicated with the Government at Washington, and all American ships and airplanes have been warned either to make for America immediately or to intern in their nearest neutral port. All Europe is aflame. A powerful fleet of airplanes and naval vessels have already been concentrated for an attack on America which is expected to be launched without delay. All of our planes from here to the Azores must have returned early this morning and picked up the inhabitants from all the isleports. Those in England will in all probability fly directly to America. There would be six between the Azores and the United States, and each one is capable of carrying a hundred and seventy-five passengers and crew."

"Could you not send for one of your planes to come out and take us back?" she asked.

He shook his head as in doubt. "It will probably be impossible. All planes will have been commandeered by the government and none will be allowed to leave. However, I will do my best to get you safely back. Personally, I shall remain here as I have work to do, and this turn of events may bring to me an exceptional opportunity." He reached for the sending key but she stayed his hand.

"I am not a quitter," she said, "if you stay, so shall I. If there is danger or risk in remaining, there is no reason why I should not share in it. War is not new to me, and there may be some ways in which I can also be of service."

He extended his hand and she placed hers in it to seal the compact. And in that simple act, a new comradeship was born out of the subtle quality of the emergency that confronted them, for to both there had come the intangible lure of this adventure beckoning them onward. "It is yours to choose," he said, "and, after all, there may be something in the *raison d'être* of things that has placed you here. I confess that I should see you leave with regret, for I have a feeling that before this is over, I shall need you."

His expression of such a thought pleased her, for she had sometimes felt keenly his unconscious assumption of self-sufficiency, and had inwardly resented it. For to the sex that has mothered the race, no attitude on the part of others may stir up as keen resentment, as that which fails to acknowledge their individual usefulness or necessity. But, in behalf of Holden, let it be noted, that his self-sufficient attitude was related only to the scientific side of his nature. His achievements had forced him to be self-reliant. He worked in a field of his own creation and his reliance on himself was therefore, not the result of egotism but of necessity. For egotism is a state of mind which is impossible to a man of vision, who must by his very nature comprehend the immensity of the field in which his own achievements, however outstanding, are at best insignificant.

Kitty Cromwell had moreover, another reason for desiring to render appreciated service to Holden; a reason that had been giving her many anxious moments as her interest in and admiration for him increased. This anxiety was related to certain stipulations of Dr. Von Sturm. He had, among other things, asked her for frequent periodic reports on everything touching Holden; his ideas, work, anything she could glean from "conversation or observation." These had been his exact words adroitly impressed upon her, and ac-

companied by a wealth of medical discussion,—too much discussion, she had felt at the time. He had seemed to over-emphasize the necessity, and had left her with the feeling that she was but little less than a spy on the man whom she had been commissioned to restore to health. But she knew that Dr. Von Sturm's methods were unusual, and he had based his demand upon the necessity of knowing his patient thoroughly, thereby the better to be enabled to prevent him from detrimental occupations or excesses. The salary was liberal, almost too liberal, she thought. To be sure, Holden was able to pay liberally, but why had the doctor insisted on supplementing her salary by additions from his own purse? Nurses however, were often called upon to do unusual things, and were not expected to reason why. But, reason about it as she would, there was always an intuitional feeling of unrest, when she thought of Dr. Von Sturm's requirements. However, she would use her own judgment when it came to the reports, and now that they were under war conditions, she would not be expected to send any for some time at least.

They had left the wireless room and walked together, each busy with his own thoughts, out into the Palm Garden. Scanning the horizon, they could see far to the North, a faint wisp of smoke from some ocean liner scurrying for America. The wind had risen, and a heavy swell was breaking through the bridge work underneath. Suddenly there was a shock and the isleport trembled as a higher roller broke over the lower deck, which ordinarily was thirty or forty feet above the sea level. Her face blanched as she looked at him saying: "The sea-cocks; had you forgotten them? You told about your instructions last night, and now the isleport is much lower."

Catching her by the hand he raced her down the ramps, down and down until they reached the lower deck. But in their haste, they had failed to properly time their arrival, for just as they reached the lower deck, they saw a giant roller with upcurved crest swooping down upon them. It was too late to retreat, so he threw an arm about her and hooked the other arm around a post to which the ramp was attached; at the same time, he swung her into such a position that the force of the wave would be diminished by breaking over him first. On it came and while an instant before, it had seemed that it would arrive all too soon, now the moments dragged as they awaited the impact. Tons of water swept over the deck. It tore at his arm, but he held on and clasped her tightly to him. The deluge passed. The waters flowed from the deck, making little rivulets from the scuppers at the sides, but still he held her,—held her until she moved slightly to free herself. At the time he could not account for the feeling that he was in an especial sense her protector. He would have done the same for anyone else, but would he have had the same feeling of elation in shielding another? He released her from the embrace in which he had held her, but still clasped her tightly by the arm as they made a dash for the door of the compressor room.

IT is one of the doctrines of modern psychology, that the interpretation of an idea, or the meaning attached to any individual experience depends for each individual, upon the associations which they have built up during their past experiences. Two people therefore, subjected to the same set of outward circumstances, would exhibit very different reactions. Our perception of things therefore, never gives to us a true picture of the thing itself, but only of the thing as it appears to us in the light of previous experiences. This fact might well lead us into the philosophical discussion of whether we really know anything from the standpoint of its own essential being. But waiving the deeper discussion of such recondite matters, it must nevertheless be admitted that the broader and more varied our experiences have been with regard to any given subject, the better are we fitted for the interpretation of new experiences of a similar nature.

As Kitty Cromwell and Bob Holden entered the compressor room and turned on the lights, the scene which met their eyes, was a complex which held for each of them widely variant meanings. What she beheld was, in its general significance, merely a mass of machinery. Her eyes wandered down the long lines of turbines and compressors, attracted here and there by the polished brass of the oiling system, and the shining steel of the motors proper. The low hum of the lighting generators, run by the wind turbines, which had been left in operation, was scarcely noticed by her unpracticed ear. At the end of the room a large control board covered with switches and polished clock-like gauges, caught her eye and fascinated her imagination, while it baffled her uninitiated mind to interpret the meaning and use of the individual items. But for Holden, each separate piece of apparatus had its definite purpose, and she could not but marvel at the coolness and assurance with which he set to work. His every move betokened the definiteness of exact knowledge; there was no indecision and not a moment was wasted.

She had been unconscious of the low hiss of escaping air, until he threw a switch which started a series of small motors; then as these gathered speed he turned a wheel which engaged the clutches operating the air valves, and gradually the hissing sound died and the motors automatically cut out. Turning to her with a look of relief on his face, he said: "The air valves are now closed and no more water can enter the bottles. The isleport is safe." Then leading her to the control board, he pointed out a series of electrically controlled depth gauges, which showed the height to which the water had risen in the bottles. "Normally," he said, "these gauges should show a hundred and eighty feet above the water level in the bottles, and this level should never be less than a hundred and sixty feet. The gauges now show a hundred and sixty-three. Another hour and we would have been too late."

He was working again now, with the same assurance and quick decisiveness, throwing switches and levers, and passing rapidly from one machine to another. She heard the hum of starting motors, then the rapidly increasing pulsations of the compressors. From time to time the structure trembled, as some higher roller washed over the lower deck. But with the compressors all in action forcing air into the bottles against the tremendous weight of the isleport, the structure was lifted little by little out of the danger zone of the waves. As they waited, Holden explained to her the mysteries of the different types of machines and taught her how to distinguish between compressor, turbine, motor and pump. Gradually, under his tuition, the appearance of the room and its equipment seemed to undergo a change, as there came to her a more accurate understanding of its paraphernalia. After half an hour, he shut down the compressors and closed the sea-cocks. As they stepped forth again upon the lower deck, the rollers were running far beneath them.

"How foolish of me to forget," he said, "yet the order was issued many months ago at the suggestion of the Navy Department. The other isleports probably now lie at the bottom of the ocean. I am glad that you thought of it in time. Judging from the

depth to which the isleport had settled, I would think the evacuation took place between seven and eight o'clock this morning. The Cabinet meeting in Washington took place last night, and the warning must have reached our fields in England and the Azores during the night. Now we must prepare for the emergency. I shall spend most of my time in the laboratory from now on, and will have to depend upon you for our meals. Should you need anything not in the pantry, I can get it from the hotel store room. You will find plenty to interest you for a few days, wandering about the isleport and we will not have to wait long."

It was after two o'clock when he left her, and she wandered out into the Palm Garden and picked up a magazine, but soon found it impossible to keep her mind on the printed page, with so many startling events pressing upon her. Her gaze drifted off across the rolling blue ocean. The world was about to be plunged into the horrors of war again, and she shuddered as she reviewed some of the scenes of another conflict. She had done a prodigious amount of war work then, although but just in her teens, knowing nothing about it when she began it; but she had done it well. Now she knew the awfulness of it and her soul recoiled at the contemplation of another reign of strife. It maddened men, made them hate because of an intangible something called patriotism, which stirred up a tangible atavistic lust to kill. Would the world never learn that war meant inevitable loss no matter what the fancied gain? She recalled Holden's words of the previous night; "A single man may some day hold the fate of the world in his hands—It would be fortunate for the world should such a discovery come to one who would use it for world peace."

Suddenly she was startled and arose from her chair. A shadow seemed to have passed over her, and she had that vague perturbing sense of being watched; but, look as she might into every nook and shadow of the Garden, she could see nothing to arouse suspicion. She decided to wander about the isleport and finally, went to the apartment and rummaged about in its closets until she unearthed a set of golf clubs,—then went down to the links. The afternoon air was invigorating and she became so engrossed in making the round, that the sun was low down toward the horizon before she bethought herself of the new duties laid upon her to provide meals for Holden and herself. Ascending hastily up the ramps, she crossed the Palm Garden where she had sat earlier in the afternoon. She was again startled to note that the magazine which she had laid down back upwards upon a table, now lay in a chair some distance from where she had sat. She would question Holden at dinner to find out whether he had been in the Palm Garden, but would do it adroitly so as not to alarm or worry him. But the later events of the evening made such interrogation unnecessary.

CHAPTER IV

Decoding a Discovery

ALTHOUGH a product of the modern age and a firm believer in the economic independence of women, Kitty Cromwell held to a few old-fashioned ideas, among which was the doctrine that every woman should be able to prepare an appetizing and wholesome meal. Often, her career as a nurse had placed her in circumstances where such an art was an asset of the greatest value. There were also times when satiated by the monotony of food procured from the vendors of table delicacies whether in hotel, restaurant, or in that mongrel of the species known as a delicatessen store, she would seek in her apartment to rejuvenate the jaded appetites of herself and friends with delicious concoctions of her own materialization. The request of Bob Holden that afternoon had come, therefore, as an inspiration to do her bit in the program he was endeavoring to carry out, rather than as an irksome duty, and she set to work upon the evening meal with a song in her heart and upon her lips.

It was dark when Holden returned from his work in the laboratory and he smiled brightly as he beheld her in a gaily colored apron, and was greeted by the enticing aroma of chops, muffins and other delicacies dear to the heart of a club habitué. The atmosphere was one of home life and reminded him of his boyhood days on a New England farm when his mother had provided food, often, frugal, but of a memory that still lingered with him.

The dinner was carried off with a spirit of good fellowship, and the room rang with laughter as they told amusing incidents of earlier days; especially when he demonstrated how the boys at a certain college he had attended, forced all freshmen to somersault their spoons over their forks to land upright in their cups, before they were allowed coffee or tea. Neither one mentioned the shadow of war hanging over them nor the perils or hazards of their situation. Both knew that the sword of Damocles hung above them but they were willing for a time to forget it.

Dinner over, Holden reached to the table and started to tune in the radio, but the only sounds were a series of whistles and spurts which recalled the radio bugbear. But suddenly, his experienced ear caught and recognized certain signals, and reaching for pencil and paper he began to record a series of dots and dashes; but whatever the purport of the message might be, it was in code and he could make nothing of it. Then as it ceased, he pushed the paper aside and said: "There will be nothing on the air tonight as the government will have sealed all broadcasting stations until arrangements have been completed for the censoring of all news. But let's go out to the radio telegraph room. Perhaps we can pick up something from England."

As he was about to rise from the receiver, he suddenly bent over and examined one of the dials on which was indicated the meter wave length. "That's funny," he observed, "that wave length is the same as we use throughout our isleport system, and the message wasn't in our code. I didn't know that anyone else was on the same wave length."

They proceeded without delay to the radio room where they had, earlier in the day, received news of the war. It was equipped with apparatus similar to that found on most of the large ocean liners. Its sending equipment was of the continuous wave type and utilized three one-half K. W. tubes in parallel. These tubes were not water cooled as in some of the higher powered land stations. The reception was recorded by means of a light flashed on a moving strip of motion picture film, which when developed, made a permanent record. It was also provided with head phones for tuning in.

As Holden seated himself at the instrument, he was mentally engrossed with the matter of the wave length which he had noticed before leaving his apartment. Passing his hands over the apparatus, he suddenly uttered a cry of astonishment as he pointed to the bank of vacuum tubes. "Those tubes are warm,—some one has been in here. That's what I was getting over the receiver, a message sent from this room. We

are not alone on the isleport. I must decode that message tonight."

To Kitty Cromwell there came in mental review, the presentiments of that afternoon; the impression of being watched and the circumstance of the magazine. But she quickly decided not to mention these incidents to Holden. It would only add to his worries and could do no good. She must not do anything that would interfere with the work he had in hand by arousing any feelings of uneasiness concerning her safety or welfare.

Holden sat down again and turned the dials seeking some message from the air, but he arose after about twenty minutes, during which time no signals had come. They went out leaving the door unlocked as they had found it. It would be well not to arouse the suspicions of the third party by any act that might indicate that his presence there was known to them. Then too, he might desire to send other messages which, should they be fortunate enough to intercept them, would give some further clue to his purposes. As they walked back to the apartment, they did not know that from a covert in the Palm Garden they were being watched, but the watcher was not he who had sent the message a half hour ago.

In the library, Bob Holden analyzed the situation. A wireless operator would not have been placed on the isleport and left there by mere chance. His presence coupled with the sending of the code message, indicated that he had been placed there for the carrying out of a definite purpose. The nature of that purpose would be revealed when the message was decoded. Holden had acquired that expertness as a wireless operator both with the Continental and with the older Morse system of dots and dashes, which enabled him to recognize the individual characteristics of the sender in much the same manner as a musician is enabled to recognize the playing of one noted artist from that of another. Thus, he knew intuitively when he was receiving the message, that the sender was an expert operator, who was working under some nervous pressure, as if in haste to finish. The dots and dashes had come across rapidly, but he had been able to interpret the letters and transcribe them with accuracy on the paper which now lay on his table. But whatever the message might be, that which lay before him was a meaningless jargon of letters, not forming any known words.

THE construction of code messages involves a multitude of systems devised for the purpose of insuring the secrecy of the message from all save the one to whom it is sent and who is provided with the key for its interpretation. Simplest of all the systems is that which merely substitutes one letter for another throughout, as for example; the use of "K" where "E" is intended, or the use of "H" in place of "A"; and so on throughout the alphabet. But such a code may be readily decoded by studying the numerical relationship of the letters used, and no message of valued secrecy would be sent in so simple a code.

Of much greater complexity are the so-called intermediate code systems where a key word or phrase is used as an intermediate between the code sent and the message intended to be communicated. Such an intermediate may be the name of a city or a historical character, a catch phrase or an entire story; anything previously agreed upon between sender and receiver. In using such a system, each letter of the intermediate or key word is added on the basis of its numerical position in the alphabet, to the corresponding letter in the code message, in order to obtain the decoded message. To illustrate, we may wish to say: "Meet me in London tomorrow." And as a code intermediate we will use the word, "Paris." The message would run thus:

Code message: WDMK — TO — HV — CVXCWE — AYLWIYYV.

Key word: PARI SP AR ISPARI SPARISPA.

Decoded message: MEET ME IN LONDON TOMORROW.

The recipient of the code message merely applies the word "Paris" as previously agreed upon, by adding "P," the sixteenth letter of the alphabet, to "W," the twenty-third letter, and the resulting letter is "M." In like manner "A" the first letter, is added to "D," and the resulting letter is "E."

The work of decoding such a message when the intermediate key word is unknown, is often a matter of great difficulty. If the message however, is of such length as to cause the key word to be repeated a great many times in succession the work of decoding is greatly facilitated. In any case, the decoding of intermediate code messages is a task not to be attempted except by an expert. The only message that may successfully resist the decoding expert, is one wherein the intermediate is a phrase, sentence or story as long as the message itself. In such a case the intermediate is not repeated.

Bob Holden had, during his residence in Washington at the time of the World War, spent many evenings with a classmate who was in the Signal Corps and whose duties involved the solution of many so-called unsolvable code systems which were offered by their inventors to the Government. They had often worked together over these problems and had found this form of mental gymnastics one which offered a broader and more varied field than was to be found in any of the current forms of puzzles. The interest once acquired, had been pursued at random intervals during the succeeding years, and he had become quite expert in the deciphering of difficult code systems. The code used by the isleport system was of his own invention. He now took the code message which he had tapped earlier in the evening, and, laying it on the table before them, proceeded to explain to Miss Cromwell some of the more important principles involved in decoding. The message as he had received it was:

"G U Z C Q T — N V.S Q W M S — J R P.K E — W M —X G S V.Q G H N D E — E B Q Y S — W — I O K O. —G O A — Z A — Q V L.O O B F — E Z I P.B Z — K Z F I Y — P.R R O M P — A E H.Q S S C — I O C S. — Z I H — S A —V I L.U K B S — M T P — P.M Z S Q R K I L.M I S — R T U L S.C — K A D D M V U.B E — O Q U Y V — Y.N U A — E A X — W V.T X — V T J I L.C — V Z Z Z K J — V.M — R O M P O E N. — C K Q J — B R V U.S E — U Z E — G E K. — N O Z."

"Ravnowickz."

In the code as received by Holden, the letters were grouped in a manner which would correspond to the words in the final decoded message, and this division was accomplished by the use of a dot and dash character differing from any of the characters of the alphabet. The use of this character is denoted in the message as given above, by a dash. Holden had noted it almost intuitively as he transcribed the message and had correctly interpreted it as indicating the completion of a word in the final message. He now explained to Kitty Cromwell, that their first step would be to determine, if possible, the number of letters in the key word. If they could determine this, they would then be able to tell at what intervals they might expect a repetition of the letters of the key

word. To this end they proceeded to carefully examine the code message in order to detect, if possible, any similarity of construction. They were not long in noticing two similar words, each having four letters, the first two of which were the same in each case. These two words unquestionably corresponded to two words in the final message each of which would have four letters. If it should happen that the two first letters in each of these two words were the same, it would naturally indicate that the corresponding letters in the key word were repeated, and would give an important clue to the number of letters in the key word. These words as indicated in the code were "IOKO" and "IOCS." They were forty letters apart in the code message. This indicated, if his reasoning should prove correct, that forty was some multiple of the number of letters in the key word. It was of course possible that the key was a phrase or sentence, or it might be a word of eight or possibly of ten letters. After some consideration, they decided on an eight letter word as the more probable. They began with the first letter of the code and went through it pointing it off into groups of eight letters each, using a small dot or period as indicated in the foregoing message. This, if correct would serve to show where any given letter of the key word was repeated. They next considered the two four letter words, "IOKO" and "IOCS," and then made a list of all the pairs of four letter words they could think of, where the two first letters were the same. From this list they selected, as expressing the greatest degree of probability, the words "will" and "with," and printed them in below the two code words. In order to test the value of this solution, it was now necessary to determine the corresponding letters of the key word. In each case, something must be added to "I" in order to give "W," and as "I" is the ninth letter of the alphabet while "W" is the twenty-third, the fourteenth letter, which is "N," was the key letter sought Similarly, a letter must be found which, added to "O" gives "I," and this letter was found to be "T."

The solution of these two words now stood thus:

siderable depth.
ware, and proposed last year.

surface of the water, which is used now for operating whistling buoys.

Code message: I O K O I O C S
Key word: N T N T
Decoded message: W I L L W I T H

If now two other key word letters could be found which, when added to the two remaining letters in each of the code words, would form the decoded words "will" and "with," the solution could hardly be doubted. Their first attempt proved a failure. They then reversed the positions of "will" and "with," and the result was as follows:

Code message I O K O I O C S
Key word: N T I S N T I S
Decoded message: W I T H W I L L

They applied themselves to the work with redoubled interest. That they had found four letters of the key word could hardly be doubted. Referring back to the original code, they noted that both "IOKO" and "IOCS" corresponded to the last four letters of the key word, if their assumption of an eight letter key word was correct. Therefore, leaving the first four letter spaces in each repetition of the key word, blank; they went through the message and inserted the "NTIS" of the key in each of the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth key letter positions throughout the message. From these key letters they next proceeded to fill in the letters in the decoded message, that resulted from the addition of the four key letters already obtained.

This process supplied a decoded message consisting of blocks of four letters alternating with four blank spaces, which, when completed read:

"— — — — EN WO — — — — G DAI
LABO — — — — RY NU — — — — WITH — — —
M KEE — — — — STRI — — — — TCH
I — — — — D UNA — — — — WILL — — — — O
PRE — — — — ANY I — — — — FERE — — —
H O U L — — — — RGEN — — — — ISE
OR FO — — — — NDRE
NES O — — — — DING — — — —
PLEN — — — — S AND — — — —."

It was now a simple matter to find the remaining letters of the key word from some of the words which were partially decoded. They picked the word "LABO — — — — RY" as unquestionably standing for laboratory. From this they figured out the key letters. The key word came to them simultaneously and they shouted as with one breath, "ATLANTIS." The decoded message now read as follows:

Code message: "GUZCQT NVSQWMS JRPKE
Key word: ATLANT ISATLAN TISAT
Decoded message: "HOLDEN WORKING DAILY

WM XGSVQGHNDE EBQYS W IOKO GOA
LA NTISATLANT ISATL A NTIS ATL
IN LABORATORY NURSE X WITH HIM

ZA QVLOOBF EZIPBZ KZFIY PRROMP

MTP PMZSQRKILMIS RTULSC
NTI SATLANTISATL ANTISA
ANY INTERFERENCE SHOULD

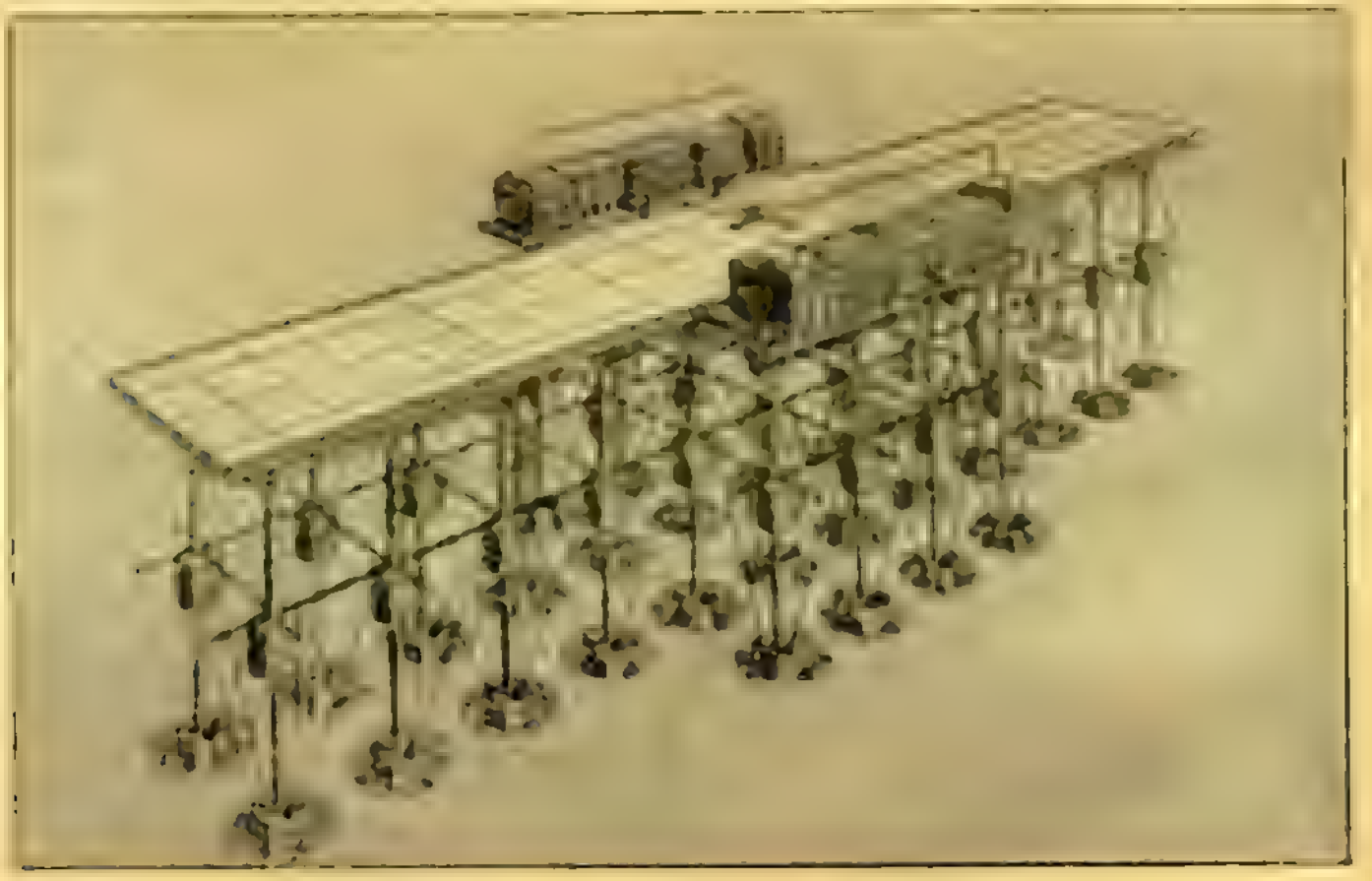
KADDMVUBE OQUYV YNUA EAX WVTX
TLANTISAT LANTI SATL ANT ISAT
EMERGENCY ARISE ROOM FOR FOUR

VTZJILC VZZZKJ VM ROMPOEN CKQJ
LANTISA TLANTI SA TLANTIS ATLA
HUNDRED PLANES ON LANDING DECK

BRVUSE UZE GEK NOZ."
NTISAT LAN TIS ATL
PLENTY GAS AND OIL."

"Ravnowickz."

Holden was elated. He had evidently tapped the message at its very beginning. He had not been in time to hear the station signal, but in all probability it was a private one and would not be listed. He surmised that the message was sent to the mobilization base and that, he now felt certain would be in the Azores. This enemy had played into his hands and the European Alliance, he now knew, would make the isleport their base for operations against the United States. They had placed this Ravnowickz here to prepare for their coming. Then as he thought over the situation he suddenly laughed aloud, and his companion looked inquiringly at him as she said: "You seem pleased over the prospect."



This shows a model of Armstrong's seadrome, or floating island, outside the water.

AN TISATLA NTISAT LANTI SATLAN
AM KEEPING STRICT WATCH ISLAND

AEHQSSC IOCS ZIH SA VILUKBS
TISATLA NTIS ATL AN TISATLA
UNARMED WILL ACT TO PREVENT

"I was thinking," he replied, "of what might have occurred had Ravnowickz been alone on the isleport today with the sea-cocks open." Fate, or whatever may be the name of the cause of those striking coincidents which seem ever to cross and tangle the purposes of mankind, would have served the spy a worthy

recompense, had it not been for the intervention of the man, whose designs it was the business of Ravnowickz to frustrate.

The situation which now confronted them was, to say the least, hazardous. An enemy was on the isleport and while Holden was too well balanced mentally to have any fears as to the final outcome, he did not underestimate the sagacity or ingenuity of his enemy, nor the power of the forces arrayed against him. Reflection showed that such a commission would be intrusted only to a man of unusual resources and cunning, and that the spy would let nothing interfere with the accomplishment of the ends for which he had been placed there. Holden felt certain, however, that the desire to know more of his own intentions, would postpone any open attack on the part of the spy. He had signified in his message that he was watching Holden and that he would prevent any interference with the designs of the European Alliance. But the message also showed very clearly that the spy was totally ignorant of the *coup d'état* which Holden was preparing. If the European Alliance thought that he was in possession of any valuable secrets, they would wish to acquire them for their own use. His first thought, therefore, must be to keep all knowledge of his intentions from the enemy. Furthermore, he must provide against any emergency that might leave him incapacitated. He needed someone on whom he could rely to act in any capacity under his directions and there was left to him no choice. Kitty Cromwell had been referred to in the message as "Nurse X." What did the spy know of her? "X," in the language of science, stood for the unknown and that was the obvious interpretation of the message. He felt that he could trust her fully and if he were going to entrust to her the secrets of the circular room and the blow he was preparing to strike, he must for the same reason, provide for her protection. The spy might seek to wrest from her the information he desired. She had already retired, leaving him to his pipe and his thoughts, but he would talk with her on the morrow.

He went out into the passage to assure himself that the doors were all securely fastened. It was now past midnight, but he had no inclination for sleep, for his mind, like that of most students, worked best when the silence of night had shut out the diversions which the sights and sounds of daytime introduced. Only twenty-four hours ago war had been virtually declared, but it seemed as if weeks had been crowded into the events of that single day, for time, like space, is measured by the succession of events which occupy it. On the morrow he would make some final tests and inspection of the apparatus which was housed under the dome of the circular room. He had hoped for the opportunity to make these tests in the open with the dome rolled aside, but the presence of the spy would preclude that now. He had been working on this apparatus for a number of years. Even during the later years of the isleport venture, it had been gradually absorbing his interest and taking more and more definite form. The present apparatus had been installed only for the purpose of making more complete tests on a more powerful scale than he had hitherto been able to provide. Now had come the opportunity to put it to tests that he had never dreamed of coming to so soon. He would have preferred another year in which to study and develop it, but there could be no postponement now. Well, he would do his best.

His thoughts wandered back through the years, groping among the friendships of the past. He recalled that night at the Harvard Club, and the scene passed like a drama before his eyes. The pledge he had made that night had been kept and soon he would test its fruits. Where was Jerry Scott? He had not seen him for the past three or four years. Jerry had meant much to him in those days. He had bought the first large block of stock in the isleport venture and then had left for parts unknown,—a wandering spirit was Jerry's. How his adventure loving nature would tingle to be here now. Letters had come from him at long intervals, from China, India and the South Seas, the last one from Africa, where he was about to depart for the interior on a hunting expedition for big game. Some day, after this affair was over and peace restored, he would bring Jerry here,—and the girl, the one who had saved Jack Rutherford,—wonder if Jerry ever—if he ever;—but Holden had drifted off to sleep in his arm chair.

CHAPTER V

Out of the Past

JERRY SCOTT sat at a table in an unobstrusive corner of a night *café* in Budapest. He loved the beautiful, vivacious city on the banks of the Danube, for it was here that he had come as a young man to study art. The years had left but slight imprint of their passage upon him. He still retained the well-knit athletic figure of former days. His hair had grayed a bit above the temples, but his eyes flashed with their old time clearness, and there was no flabbiness of flesh on face or body, for Jerry had always lived in a clean, wholesome manner.

He was disappointed as he sat there, not discouraged nor despondent, for these extreme moods were practically unknown to him. He had worked all day in his studio on a picture, that through the years was seldom out of his mind, and ever and anon sought to find expression. At last he thought he had discovered a model. The eyes were deep blue, the hair lustrous black, but somehow the expression he sought was not there and, try as he would, he could not coax it into being. He had hoped to exhibit at a Paris Salon the coming winter and he had hoped to make this his masterpiece. But why continue the pursuit of a phantom. Honors had come to him without the seeking. He had sufficient wealth to maintain himself in his happy-go-lucky care-free existence.

Now the old restlessness had seized upon him again. He longed for adventure, excitement, even for hardships; for the battle of wits against man or nature. The whole city and country was restless, in fact all Europe seethed with an undercurrent of excitement. Groups of army officers filled the hotels and *cafés* and were the center of interest to all eyes, as they strutted about with a suddenly elevated idea of self-importance. There was an undisguised feeling of animosity against America. American travelers were no longer welcome. They were treated with haughty disdain and in many cases openly insulted. Even the money they spent could no longer secure for them the ordinary courtesies due to travelers, and they were rapidly leaving for England or for home. But Jerry Scott was a cosmopolitan who spoke the language and adopted the customs of the native born, so he went about unobserved and unmolested.

The *café* was of the order of an old time *borhaz* or wine hall, with a door at either end. As he sat in the half shadows of his corner, he interested himself with the occupants of the various tables. A stringed orchestra on a raised dais played *Czigany* music. Gypsy music submits itself to no musical precepts. It is invented to speak for them. It fascinates while its strident tones annoy. At times it was almost drowned in the babble of conversation and laughter, but never

quite. A strolling band of Gypsies entered, their colorful costumes adding picturesqueness to the kaleidoscopic scene. They began to play and dance. It was the famous *Csardas* or Tavern Dance, loved by all Hungarians. A number of the occupants left their places at the tables and joined in the weird fantastic movements of the dance. It was intoxicating, fascinating in its subtleties and palpitating with power. The music steals over the senses and kindles memories and yearnings, bitter and sweet. It scourges while it enchains and one longs for the peace and quietude of nature, of the mountains and streams. The dancers race and swing. Weird notes chase each other up and down over the strings. The music suddenly becomes rythmical and measured, then it mounts again in confusion and the *Csardas* ends in a bursting crescendo.

Jerry Scott looked around the room. Not a few of the denizens of the place were wiping their eyes. The scene was a familiar one to him, yet it always accentuated his unrest. Now he knew why he had come here. He really wanted the unrest. It was the Chord of the Seventh in his nature, which he had never been able to resolve. That was the thing in *Czigany* music that called to him. It was the expression of their own unrest; the thing that had made them wanderers.

As the evening slipped by, new groups entered while others left, but generally the numbers in the room increased. A group of army officers entered. There was no vacant table but the attendants hastened to clear one and none of the occupants objected. The army had suddenly risen to a position which demanded respectful deference as its right. The round table offered them was only a short distance from the place where Scott was sitting, and as they took their chairs the clanking of scabbards added to the din and confusion. One of their number was dressed in citizens' clothes and was apparently about to depart the city on some mission of importance. Scott payed but slight attention to the group, who talked mostly in undertones, until there suddenly came a loud scraping of chairs and jingle of accoutrements, as they arose and with uplifted glasses drank a toast to *"Der Tag."* He had heard that toast twenty years before in the *Bier-Hallen* of Germany and its fulfillment had been sealed in blood. It aroused him now and he listened to catch if possible, something of the conversation as it drifted across the intervening sound waves. The man in citizens' clothes sat with his back toward him and the conversation was carried on in German. Words and phrases came to him in the disjointed manner characteristic of words which must find their way through gaps in the general conversation—the laughter, and the clinking of glasses. Suddenly he caught the words; *"Uebersee Flugzeug Verkehr"*; then, *"Insel Zwei."* That would be Bob Holden's system and Isleport Number Two. Scott shifted his seat around the table in order to get a better view of the party and at the same time place himself in a deeper shadow. Another half hour passed in which he caught nothing further of importance, but noted much conversation carried on in low tones. The party evidently shared in some information which they did not intend should be revealed. Finally they arose again to drink another toast, this time to the success of their departing comrade. As the man in citizens' clothes turned from right to left to clink glasses with his compatriots, his side face was turned in Jerry Scott's direction. He was a powerfully built man of average height, with a slight stoop to his shoulders which served to accentuate the unusual length of his arms, and his face bore a pointed black beard, which continued up the side face around the base of the jaw. Scott was struck by a feeling of familiarity. Where had he seen that face before? His artistic training had made him a keen observer of people and he seldom forgot a face or figure. The group now left the *Café* and for a time Jerry Scott sat there turning over in his mind the pages of the past. Then suddenly he jumped to his feet and rushed from the place. Hailing a passing taxicab, he was driven rapidly to his hotel. He had barely time to catch a night express train for Vienna.

Arriving at Vienna, he watched the passengers disembarking from the train but saw no sign of blackbeard. The Austrian would probably go by way of Cologne to Calais, thence by boat to London. Jerry Scott did not care to shadow his man. Instead he would make for London by the fastest route, taking airplane from Vienna to Paris, then from Paris to London. This would bring him to the latter place late that afternoon. The Austrian would probably be a day later in arriving. Once in London, he would wait about the landing field of the Trans-Atlantic Airplane Service, Inc., during such times as planes were scheduled to leave, until the man he was following put in an appearance. He had never seen any of the isleports of Holden's system, but he had read much of them and knew the general features of the service between the continents. He did not have to wait long; late on the afternoon of the day following his own arrival, blackbeard was at the landing field, and they took the same plane for Isleport Number Two, leaving London after dark. There were more than a hundred passengers on the plane, so that it was an easy matter for Scott to remain at a distance and yet keep a close watch on his quarry. But through the night the Austrian slept and Scott dozed in his comfortable reclining couch chair.

THEY arrived at Fayal in the Azores, early the following morning and seeing that the Austrian was having his ticket punched for a stop-over, Scott did likewise. A number of the passengers were stopping over on the island and others were preparing to take their places. They all disembarked for a time to stretch themselves, while the plane was being refurnished with fuel and water, and examined by the mechanicians. The general bustle and confusion enabled Jerry Scott to keep track of his man without appearing to do so.

The landing field was of necessity, outside of the city on a tract of ground covering some hundred acres or more and situated on a high plateau overlooking the port. A road had been constructed from the landing field down into the city of sufficient width and evenness to admit of automotive traffic. Buses were waiting for the arrival of the plane and, seeing the Austrian turn his bags over to the driver of one of these vehicles, Jerry placed his own luggage in the care of the one immediately following. Seating himself beside the chauffeur, he questioned him on the way to the port, regarding their destination, and found that all the buses had their terminal at the one principal hotel. Leaving directions with the chauffeur for the disposal of his bags, he disembarked a short distance before they arrived and strolled through the quaint Portuguese streets, keeping his eyes meanwhile on the passengers of the first bus now unloading in front of the hotel. He watched the Austrian as he entered the building; but he soon reappeared and entered a waiting automobile. Scott summoned another and managed to convey to the Portuguese driver that he wanted to follow at a reasonable distance. They wound through a maze of rough streets and finally entered upon an apparently newly constructed roadway leading out of the city on the opposite side to that which they had entered. The road had been cut through the rough volcanic rock following more or less the devious courses of a series of ravines until it emerged on a high tableland, not

unlike the one at the place where they had landed that morning on the opposite side of the city. As they came out on this plateau, the driver stopped and seemed unwilling to proceed any further. Jerry Scott was nonplussed. The chauffeur spoke only a few words in broken English and he could get no explanation from him. Finally Jerry addressed him in French and the face of the Portuguese brightened as he broke into voluble explanations. The plateau was Government ground. They would soon encounter the guard who would question them, demand their passes, and when told that they did not have any, would probably put them in prison. Of late they had become very strict. What were they doing on the plateau? He knew not, only work, much work, leveling it like the floor of a dance hall. They said it was to plant vineyards, but,—*Le Diable*, every one knew that it was not necessary that a vineyard be so smooth. Then there were many men in the city; men from all over Europe, strong men with square shoulders. They wore no uniforms but it was easy to see that they walked like soldiers. No inducement that Scott could offer would persuade him to go further so he finally ordered him to return to the hotel. At any rate, it would not do to risk the chance of being himself detained while his quarry proceeded on his way.

Arriving again at the hotel he entered and looked over the register, but so far as he was able to determine, there was no indication of the Austrian's signature. He decided therefore, to delay his own registration and await further developments. About noon, the man for whom he waited appeared in company with a group of four others, all younger men of distinctive military bearing. As they stood conversing in the lobby, they were joined by another older man of Germanic appearance and wearing a close cropped mustache. As he approached the group, the Austrian raised his hand and clicked his heels in the beginning of a military salute, but the gesture was cut short by one of his companions intercepting his rising arm. A low voiced admonition caused him to change the direction of motion which ended in an awkward hand-shake. After talking for a few moments, the party went to the elevator and ascended. Scott spent a weary day waiting for their reappearance.

It was late in the afternoon when they re-emerged from the elevator and went into the dining room together. Scott followed them, mingling with a number of guests, and managed to secure a small table near to the outer wall, a short distance from where the group were sitting. To avoid notice he seated himself with his back toward them and as he ate, perused a German newspaper, which he had picked up in the lobby, but secretly he listened to every word of the conversation that he could catch. Turning over the pages of the paper, his eye caught a news item accompanied by a photograph which at first glance, had a decidedly familiar look. A closer inspection revealed that it was a picture of the officer who had joined the group in the lobby. The picture showed an officer in military uniform but the original was now in citizens' dress. Scott read the item. It announced that Colonel ———, who was one of the leading aeronautical engineers in the German Air Service had left for Lisbon to confer with the Portuguese Government relative to the establishment of an extensive aeroplane service between Lisbon and the Azores. The service was to be established for the purpose of rapid transportation of grapes and other fruits from the islands to the mainland. Scott read the article over again carefully. It was evidently published to avoid suspicion should any one recognize the Colonel en route. He was more than dubious of the truthfulness of the account in so far as it related to the real business in hand. Something was certainly brewing. He recalled the military activities in Hungary and the journey of the man whom he had followed here and whose objective was, in all probability, one of Bob Holden's isleports only twelve hundred miles from the coast of America. Why should these two now be in conference. He was certain that the newly constructed road over which he had ridden that day, led to a landing field for airplanes, and the purpose of such extensive and secret preparations was not to be found in peaceful agricultural pursuits, but in more warlike preparations against the United States. He could catch but little of the conversation and there was nothing in what he did overhear that was out of the ordinary trend. After dinner they arose and returned to the lobby and Scott following, overheard the Colonel say: "Then you will leave tonight. Let me hear from you when you arrive."

JERRY SCOTT knew that a plane leaving London about noon was due to arrive at Fayal at ten o'clock that night and would leave an hour later arriving at Isleport Number Two early the next morning. In order to avoid being noticed by the Austrian, during the interval of waiting for the plane, he secured his luggage and found a taxi which took him out to the landing field. There were offices and a waiting room on the field and the employees lived in a small hotel there. Scott sought and found the manager of the station. To him he presented his credentials as a director of the company and they spent the hours until the arrival of the plane in a conference upon the situation. The manager was an ace of World War fame and was greatly interested in what Scott told him. He had heard rumors but knew very little of what was actually taking place on the other side of the city, as he and his men were confined very closely by their duties at the landing field. It was finally decided between them that he was to warn his men secretly, to be ready to leave at a moment's notice. A spare plane was kept at the field for use in case of accident or injury to one of the regular planes. This would be kept fueled and conditioned for a quick getaway. To insure the needed opportunity, they decided to keep the gates to the grounds closed except during the time of arrival and leaving of planes. In case of any trouble arising, he would be notified by wireless from the company's headquarters in London or New York.

The arrival of the London plane was attended by the usual confusion of disembarking passengers. As the buses arrived from the hotel, he noted with satisfaction the presence of the man whom he was following. Many of the passengers were making a stop-over at the Azores and Scott found no difficulty in securing passage. He selected a vacant chair in the rear end of the great car and made himself comfortable for the night. The car was equipped with sleeping chairs which could be inclined backward at any angle desired and the smooth motion of the airplane was conducive to sleep, so the night passed without event.

They arrived at Isleport Number Two shortly after seven o'clock on the morning of the day preceding Holden's arrival. Jerry Scott gave his bags to a porter on the landing deck and followed the Austrian at a distance. The latter was unencumbered with baggage, having evidently left it at Fayal. This indicated to Jerry that he would not be on the hotel register. Inasmuch as passengers often stopped over for a few hours between planes, little notice was paid to arrivals, who wandered about as they desired during intervals of the service. The Austrian evidently knew the ground and wandered about in leisurely fashion, taking a circuitous route which eventually led

down the series of ramps to the lower deck. From a secluded position, Scott watched him as he examined the life boats, and, when he thought himself unobserved, the Austrian peered underneath the tarpaulin which covered one of the motor launches, and Jerry rightly conjectured that it was his intention to stow himself away in one of these launches. Having settled the matter of the headquarters of his quarry, Jerry Scott went to the office and registered, using an assumed name.

During the remainder of that day and the succeeding one, he kept unobtrusive watch over the movements of the Austrian. The latter kept aloof from the hotel offices and the more public places, remaining in remote parts of the Palm Garden. He appeared to be leisurely waiting for the arrival of some person or event. Only once did Scott see him enter the dining room and that, just after the arrival of one of the planes.

At seven o'clock on the morning of the second day after his arrival, Jerry Scott was called to the telephone and told to pack his bags, leave them in the hall outside his room, and come immediately to the office as the Isleport was to be evacuated. Dressing quickly, he slipped his largest bag into a closet and left the others as instructed. As he went out to take the elevator for the office floor, he found the hall alive with excited people running to and fro, asking questions which no one could answer, arranging baggage and carrying coats and bundles. Arriving at the office floor the elevator opened upon a scene of greater confusion. A line was formed to the desk as the guests checked out. The foyer was rapidly filling with excited groups as each elevator from the upper stories deposited its human load. Coffee and sandwiches were being served in the dining room with everyone standing, while the hotel staff moved from group to group assuring them that there was no immediate danger. When a majority of the guests had gathered, the manager called for silence and explained that the management had received a radiogram, telling them that war against the United States was imminent, and that the orders were to evacuate the isleports. Three planes were on their way, two having left Fayal in response to a message from England; the third had been halted at Isleport Number Three and would wait there for the arrival of the other two, then would proceed to the United States, stopping for the passengers at this isleport. Three other planes were returning from England on a non-stop flight.

At a few minutes after eight the three planes arrived. They told how they had received the message just in time to make their getaway while a mob was storming at the locked gates. A few planes from the landing field on the opposite side of Fayal had followed them for a short distance, then had turned back. The embarkation began. Jerry Scott went through the crowd looking for the Austrian, but he was not in sight. He then slipped away in the confusion and secreted himself in some dense shrubbery in the Palm Garden, where he remained until long after the last plane had vanished in the morning haze. As he saw it swallowed up in the western mist he felt that he had done a foolish thing. His love of adventure however, could not be denied. If, as he now felt certain, the Austrian had come to the isleport to prepare a base for operations against America, he, Scott, would eventually be made a prisoner. He could easily manage however, to manufacture a story of having inadvertently been left behind. It would be a matter of greater difficulty to keep out of sight of the spy, who would imagine himself alone on the isleport. Scott knew nothing of the presence of Holden who had arrived the previous night. He would not now risk going below to find out what the Austrian was doing, so he remained hidden in a place whence he could command a view of the ramp.

It was past noon, when he espied a figure slowly ascending the ramp. As the figure came into full view, although at some distance away, Scott was astounded to note first the absence of beard, then the growing resemblance not to the Austrian, but to Bob Holden. He was on the point of revealing himself, when he caught sight of the Austrian slipping around a far corner of the hotel. Holden was under surveillance. In the instant of pause occasioned by the sight of the spy, Scott did some rapid thinking. He knew that the presence of the Austrian boded no good to his friend, and in such a situation he reasoned that it were better for him to remain as a spy upon the spy. Controlling himself by an almost superhuman effort, he dropped back into his place of concealment. Why had Bob Holden not left with the planes that morning when the isleport was evacuated? Knowing the scientist as he did, he conjectured that his remaining behind must be related in a definite manner to the impending war. At any rate, he would see to it that his friend had every opportunity to carry on, unmolested. Jerry Scott smiled inwardly over the subtleties of the situation, and the smile ended in a tension of the jaw muscles as the old fighting instinct reasserted itself. He was at the old game again, on scout duty, and all his old time cunning swept over him making every faculty alert. He loved the game with its lure of adventure and he would play it now as never before. He knew that his most arduous duties would be at night, so he slipped through the thickets keeping always concealed, until he reached the hotel, where he went to his room and caught a few hours of sleep.

HE awoke as the light was fading in the early autumn sky and it was dark by the time he emerged from the hotel. He descended to the second deck where he secreted himslf a short distanc from the ramp and waited. In about half an hour he heard footsteps stealthily ascending the ramp from the deck below, and soon saw the broad shoulders of the Austrian ascending through the gloom. As the spy continued his ascent to the deck above, Scott followed. The sound of the waves below served to drown his footsteps, especially as his quarry was also moving. Arriving at the fourth deck, the spy moved along the wall of the hotel and entered a door in one of the wings. Scott was considering whether or not he would follow and run the risk of being discovered by the spy inside, for he was uncertain whether the door opened into a room or a hall, when a light appeared through the drawn blind of a nearby window. He passed around the two outer walls of the room and discovered a blind not fully drawn, through which he could see into the interior. It proved to be the radio-telegraph room and the Austrian was seated at the table operating the key. He was sending a message, probably to those with whom he had been in conference the day they had stopped at Fayal. Scott withdrew again into the shadows of the shrubbery. Soon the light was flicked out and the spy emerged from the room and slipped away in the direction of the ramp. Jerry Scott remained for a few minutes in his place of concealment considering this new development. He knew nothing of radio and must, therefore, remain unenlightened regarding any messages that the spy might send. He wished for Bob Holden. Bob was an expert in everything pertaining to radio and might be able to tap any messages. Meditating over this, he wondered whether he ought not to go immediately in search of Holden's

apartment and enlist his aid. He was startled to see two figures approaching from around the end of the hotel. He was too far distant to recognize them in the darkness, but he knew by the general figure and carriage that one of them was Holden; the other,—could it be a woman? Had Holden married during his absence? He could hardly believe it; the companion might after all be a man. But he had no time to investigate, he must follow the spy. Back on the lower deck, he reconnoitred the situation and as he approached the motor-launch rendezvous of the spy, noted a faint streamer of light through a crevice in the covering. He crept nearer and peered through a small opening. The Austrian was rolling himself up in a blanket on the leather cushions of the launch. Two service revolvers lay within easy reach. Then the lights were switched off. His work for the night was over.

Scott considered whether it would not be best to enter and bind his adversary while he slept, but he was unarmed and it would be impossible to enter the launch in the dark without making some noise. He had no feeling of fear regarding such an unequal combat but, on the whole, it was inadvisable to enter into situations of extreme risk if he would protect Holden. Moreover he wished to know more of the purposes of the spy and the designs of those who had placed him on the isleport. He therefore abandoned the idea for the present.

For some hours he prowled about the isleport steeping himself in the glories of the moon imbued tropical night. A mocking bird woke the echoes in the Palm Garden and as the flute-like notes floated from his silvery throat and trilled off through the waving palms, the night cast its enchantment over him. The chill of early autumn was in the air and the moaning of the breakers formed a melodious fundamental for the overtones of the winged songster. A steamer rug that had been left behind in the precipitate hegira of the morning, caught his eye, and stretching himself in a steamer chair, he wrapped the rug about him and was soon lost in the fantastic fabric of his dreams; dreams not of war and combat, but of laughing blue eyes and raven hair and of lips that lightly kissed his forehead, just as he awoke to find the first slanting rays of the morning sun shining in his face. He arose hastily and slipped cautiously back to his room. Here he bathed and shaved and then descended to the hotel kitchen in search of food.

Jerry Scott yearned to seek out the quarters of his friend; to sit and talk with him in the old time good fellowship. But when the yearning was strongest there came to him the thought that the best service he could render to Holden was by keeping relentless watch over his adversary. The situation was exceptional, for of the four persons on the isleport, he alone, knew of the existence of the other three and he therefore, held the position of vantage. Ordinarily, one does not watch another of whose presence they know nothing. The spy would naturally be on the lookout only for Holden and his companion, assuming that he knew that Holden had a companion. Scott would thus find it an easier task to watch the spy if he kept himself separated from Holden and his quarters. His allegiance to his friend and to the cause of which Holden was the exemplar, called up within him an unwavering stoicism, to which the granite of the New England hills, the playground of his early youth, seemed to have contributed something of their essential nature. And after all, the pleasures which this lifelong friendship offered would only be deferred for a short time; meanwhile he must watch and wait, giving to Holden the opportunity to carry on with the work which had led him into this voluntary exile.

But in order to carry out his plan, Scott reasoned that it would first be necessary to locate Holden's quarters, then select a room for himself so positioned that he would have a clear view of the entrance to his friend's rooms. Holden had, in the days of their former association, often talked to him about equipping one of the isleports with laboratories and workshop for the development of his various experiments, and Scott, during the few days he had been there, had noted the circular room and the overhanging wing, and had concluded that this was the consummation of his friend's plans. Holden's apartment would undoubtedly be closely connected with these rooms and Scott had often noted the door opening upon the area near the fountain. He was at a loss, however, as to means for obtaining confirmation of this view until he thought of the probability of procuring a room plan of the hotel from the office. With this prospect in view he went to the office and found the plan he sought. Each deck plan was enclosed in a glass covered frame and with them was shown the two corresponding floors of the hotel. On the plan of the fourth deck, he located the outer door and saw the stairway leading up from it to the eighth floor, and on the plan of this floor he noted the apartment and laboratories which were marked "PERMANENTLY RESERVED." He was certain now that this was the location of Holden's quarters. He also noticed the door at the end of the apartment hallway, leading out into the hotel hall on the same level. Making his way up through the hotel to this door, he found it securely locked with a special type of lock, not to be found on any of the other doors of the hotel. He returned to the room which he had been occupying and gathering up his belongings, transferred them to the room he had selected for himself in a projecting wing of the seventh floor. This room was so situated that it commanded a view of the approach to the outer door of Holden's apartment and he spent the remainder of the day there reading and watching. But the best laid plans "gang aft agley" for even as he watched, Kitty Cromwell was walking into the clutches of the spy at the opposite end of the Palm Garden.

CHAPTER VI

Ravnowickz Shows His Hand

THEIR second morning on the isleport found Bob Holden and Kitty Cromwell early astir. At breakfast he broached the subject of the spy. He sought to allay any misgivings on her part by recalling that inasmuch as their own visit to the isleport was unknown, the presence of the spy was therefore, not intended as a menace or threat to them personally. Yet, he continued, it was always better to be prepared for any emergency and it was but the part of precaution that they take all reasonable measures against the hazards of the situation which confronted them. Crossing the room he opened a small closet and took from a drawer two revolvers, at the same time asking her if she were familiar with the use of firearms.

She replied that revolver practice had been required of her while in hospital service during the World War, and that she had attained some proficiency in shooting at a mark.

"That is good," he replied and handing her one of the revolvers, he continued, "I think it best for both of us to go armed. Do not leave the room at any time without this. It would be foolish as well as hazardous, to attempt to find our enemy in so vast a place as this, with so many opportunities for hiding. Besides, it would be better not to arouse suspicion concerning our knowledge of his presence here. I shall feel much easier, knowing that you will have a means of protection should an emergency arise. I shall be busy in the

laboratory all day, and cannot ask you to make yourself a prisoner here. But first, I will go down to the switchboard and connect it so that a call from any part of the isleport will come to me direct. You will also find in every hall of the hotel and at various stations outside, an alarm bell and push button. By pressing one of these buttons an alarm will be sounded all over the isleport. They are used as a danger signal in case of fire or storm. Should you ring it, I can get the station where the call was made and will hasten to you."

After he left, she busied herself for a time about the apartment. Finally she put on her coat and, placing the revolver in her pocket, went out for a stroll about the isleport. Instead of leaving by the usual door, however, she proceeded to the opposite end of the hall, through the door to which Holden had furnished her with a key, and into the hotel hallway, finally emerging from the opposite side of the building out upon the fourth deck. So it happened that Jerry Scott, who had placed himself in a position to watch the outer door, missed her.

The wind had risen and to the northwest a bank of storm-clouds rose tier on tier, like distant hills. Huge rollers were breaking into lines of feathery foam at their crests. It was an exhilarating sight to see them coming on and on like the serried phalanxes of a mighty army; to hear them break through the struts and braces beneath the structure, then watch them as they regathered force and continuity beyond the opposite side of the isleport. Gradually the picture transposed itself in her mind. The onrushing rollers became the ranks of mighty armies seeking to engulf the work of one man, but were broken into fragments by the creation that his hand and brain had wrought. Was the picture prophetic of the results about to be consummated when the mighty Armada now gathering, should be hurled against them? Looked at with eyes that had witnessed the devastating effects of war and the destruction which involved victor and vanquished alike, it seemed hopelessly incredible. A few days would see this marvel of the age either sunk to the bottom of the ocean or, worse still, occupied by the advancing hordes of Central and Eastern Europe. She abhorred war and would willingly lay down her life that others might live in peace. But against all reason, all the experience of the past, she had faith in the ability of this man, even though he defied the universe. She knew that whatever he had planned to do, would not be done by any of the known agents of destruction, and that it must be accomplished before the enemy was near enough to retaliate. One shell or torpedo would wreck the thinly armored observatory or the unarmored isleport.

As these thoughts were passing through her mind, she continued her stroll along the gravelly walks, pausing now and then to gaze off across the ocean, until she had reached the farther end of the Garden. Standing for a moment beside a thicket of shrubbery, her arms were suddenly seized from behind and pinioned to her sides, and she was forcibly propelled into a secluded spot. The admonition spoken into her ear from behind, not to scream or make any noise, was unnecessary, for she inwardly knew that her assailant would seek to gain information from her, rather than to inflict upon her any bodily harm. She gripped the revolver in her coat pocket and it gave her a feeling of assurance. Her senses were keenly alert as they stopped within a sheltering fringe of bushes and the spy faced her about. He wore no mask other than the black beard that covered his chin and extended well up over his side face. He was about five feet ten inches in height, heavy shouldered and muscular. There was something about his face and build that gave rise in her mind to a feeling of familiarity, a vague sense of having seen him somewhere before, but there was no time to consider this for he was speaking to her, and she must be alert to win in the game of wits that she would have to play.

"You know me not," he said half questioningly, "but I too am working with Herr Doctor Von Sturm." He hissed his s's. "He wish that you give me information concerning Herr Holden." She noted that all his sentences ended with a rising inflection as if half in question; also that he enunciated with a certain precision indicative of one who has acquired a language after the passing of the early and more acquisitive years. A wave of disgust swept over her at the insinuation that he considered her a partner in spying on Holden. She made no reply for a moment. His insinuation must be overlooked even though she appear to be in league with him, in order to protect her friend.

"Well," he said, "I wait your answer. What does he do in there?" He pointed to the observatory. "I have nothing to report," she replied. "I have been here only a day and have never been inside of his workshop."

"Only a day," he queried, "and why did you remain here when the others all leave?" She told him briefly of how they had been inadvertently left behind. "Then you knew not of the war? He knows now. Is it not so? And why has he not sent a message for *ein Flugzeug?*"

She did not know whether he intended to trap her into answering in German, or whether it was a mere slip into his own tongue, but she lied bravely. "He wirelessed for one but all planes are commandeered and none are allowed to leave."

This seemed to satisfy him. Then suddenly he said: "I must get into his laboratory, the observatory. I would see what he does in there. You must help me. You will get his key and make an impression of it in sealing wax for me." She shook her head slowly, then came the thought that she must appear to acquiesce in his wishes. Such a course would at least gain for them some time. "That will be very hard to do," she said, "but I will try."

His face hardened and he clutched her arm until she winced with the pain and he almost hissed as he said; "No double dealing with me. I know all about you. Herr Doctor help you when you needed help. We will stand for nothing but loyalty and service. You get me that key or an impression of it, today if possible,—certainly not later than tomorrow morning. Leave it on that table where you sometimes sit across from the fountain on the other side of the hotel. That is nearer to your door. Remember if you double-cross me neither of you will leave this place alive."

He disappeared into the underbrush as silently as he had come. Kitty Cromwell continued her walk around the Garden reviewing in her mind her recent interview. Where had she seen him before? The upper face had a haunting, unpleasant familiarity. It had probably been at Dr. Von Sturm's where she had come in contact with many of his friends and clients. The Doctor's purpose in placing her with Holden was now apparent. Von Sturm was undoubtedly an emissary of some of the Central European States and had been supplying them with information preparatory to the war for some time.

THE double rôle in which he had placed her, incensed her. She was a spy; the thought was revolting. But in this capacity she was in a better position to serve Holden by unmasking the intentions of the enemy. She would use the Doctor's own methods against him; would use them for the man she admired

above all men. She had not comprehended any deeper feelings respecting him. Hers was the homage offered to an ideal. Holden appealed to her in all the essentials which represented to her mind the attributes most to be desired in an ideal companion. She had reached that stage in life and experience which rates mental attainments as paramount to all others. That coterie whom the social set denominated as thinkers, the pseudo-philosophic clique, who manufactured a philosophy to suit the demands of their own existence, who centered their system in the relations of the sexes, and used biology and psychology as a cloak for libertinism—for them the emotions stood in place of the mind. Kitty Cromwell had thought too deeply about matters of the heart, the emotions, about life itself, to treat such matters superficially. Not that she adopted the sophisticated pose, for she realized that sophistication in its modern sense had become more a pose than designation for a true lover of knowledge which the term originally implied. But experience had taught her that premature advances in the path of friendship usually presaged an unwarranted precocity in the manifestations of what passed for affection. It was not that she felt in any sense bound by conventions, for none foresaw more clearly than she that conventions are short cuts, rules of thumb, for the guidance of non-thinking humans. They existed for the purpose of making thought unnecessary. But she also saw clearly that the abrogation of conventions does not and never can establish the intellectual soundness of unconventional acts. She disliked conventions because they were unthinking and therefore superficial, but she avoided the equally stereotyped anomalism of the social iconoclast.

Holden's friendship had therefore appealed to her as something real. His philosophy transcended the relations of sex and found its roots in the broader human relations. To neither of them had there ever occurred the slightest question as to the status of their association on the isleport, for their relations had always been on the impersonal plane. His treatment of her was tinged with an inbred consideration accorded to the sex of which his mother would ever remain the prototype; an old-fashioned dogma, if one should choose so to call it, yet one which expresses a sentiment whose passing may be viewed with regret. Whatever therefore, had been her attitude when she accepted the commission which had placed her in her present situation, the constant association with this man, the insight into his thoughts and motives which had been revealed to her, and the conspicuous bearing of his purposes on the present international imbroglio, all conspired to win her whole hearted allegiance to him and to the cause he sponsored.

Returning in her thoughts to the matter of the key demanded by Ravnowickz, she could easily procure a complicated looking key from several she had already noticed in a desk drawer, take an impression of it, and leave it in the morning on the table indicated by the spy. He would not ascertain the deception until the following night and by that time anything might happen. If it became necessary, she would go to Holden and tell him all, then remain with him until after the battle.

She reentered the apartment by the same route that she had taken in leaving earlier in the morning. It was now almost noon so she set about preparing a lunch, which she decided she would take on a tray to Holden in the laboratory.

AFTER leaving Kitty Cromwell in the apartment that morning, Holden went directly to the telephone switchboard, and made the connection which he had indicated in their conversation. He then went to the laboratory and proceeded with the work he had planned. His workshop comprised two large rooms situated on opposite sides of a hallway which connected at one end with the hall of his apartment and at the other with the circular room called the observatory. Of the two opposite rooms opening on this hallway, one was his laboratory and the other his instrument and machine workshop. The observatory was a large room also, but did not convey the idea of spaciousness on account of the amount of equipment installed in it. In the center of this room was a pedestal on which an instrument, resembling in its general appearance a sawed-off telescope, was mounted. This instrument was raised well into the semi-spherical dome above the level of the landing deck, and was surrounded by an operating platform situated at such a height that a man standing on the platform would have his head and shoulders raised above the level of the upper deck.

The instrument which bore a superficial resemblance to a telescope, comprised a barrel devise of some two feet in diameter and about ten feet in length, and was pivoted in such a manner as to allow it to be turned in any direction or depressed to any angle of inclination that might be desired within the limits imposed by the circular steel wall of the room. This tube was equipped with a series of metallic disks made of a new metallic element whose discovery was credited to Holden. This metal was known as glorium because of certain reactions to the cathode ray. Connected with the glorium disks was a series of high tension electric apparatus with complicated wiring. On one side of the room was a bank of twenty vacuum tubes some four feet in height. These tubes recalled in their general appearance, the large vacuum tubes of a high powered radio transmitting equipment, but differed from these in the essentials of their inner construction. It was the function of these tubes to transmute the current furnished them into that form required for use in connection with the glorium disks, and these in turn when actuated by that particular form of electric discharge, produced the peculiar phenomenon that Holden intended using against the forces of the European Alliance.

Although originally installed only for test purposes, there was no inadequacy in power or in the general structure of the equipment. With a wind blowing from fifteen to twenty miles an hour, a current was produced by the generators which was adequate to the running requirements of the apparatus. With a wind of less force the storage batteries could be used for additional power, if required. Moreover the current would be used only during short periods of time. Holden therefore, had no misgivings as to the effectiveness of the apparatus. As to the distance at which it would be effective, he had made no adequate tests and had only theory and his own calculations to fall back upon. In addition to this matter of incomplete test data, there were many refinements which it had been his intention to work out, but, on the whole, he was not unprepared for the magnitude of the test so suddenly thrust upon him.

While Kitty Cromwell was walking about the isleport, Bob Holden was giving a final minute examination to each part of the apparatus, testing out its various circuits and seeking for any possible mechanical imperfections. The vernier adjustment to one of the glorium disks worked hard and stiff, releasing itself with sudden jerks. He removed the screw, took it into his workshop and, putting it into a small lathe, worked the screw in with oil until it ran smoothly, then reassembled it in its place. A ground wire at-

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tached to the steel framework of the structure had become corroded. He prepared a new surface and brazed the wire to it, then coated the joint with a hard wax to protect it from the corroding action of the salt air.

He worked rapidly and with precision, his hands putting into execution the dictates of his ever active mind. As with artificers of skill, there seemed to be an intangible union between his receptive senses and his manual power of expression, as if his mental ideas took to themselves outward forms like crystals defining themselves from the mother-liquor of thought. Much of the apparatus had been shaped into its present being by his own hands, and to all of it he had given the finishing touches, so that it was doubly his own creation. This exercise of his own handiwork was not due to any refusal on his part to acknowledge the existence of superior craftsmen; but a perfect work must, of necessity, involve something of the soul of the artisan, and the delicate balance of forces, the perfect homogeneity demanded in the functioning of all of its parts, eliminated of necessity, the unsympathetic fashioning of uninspired labor.

The telephone bell rang. Kitty Cromwell had prepared lunch and wished to serve it in the laboratory. The thought of a few moments of rest and refreshment captivated him. Luncheon over he proposed to show her the mysteries of the circular room. The peculiar looking tube mounted on the central pedestal, with its maze of wires, generators and control apparatus, excited her imagination until her countenance expressed the questions she would not ask. She knew that he would tell her in due time if he wished to do so. He did, and the story lost nothing of interest in the telling.

"Back in the aeons when the earth was a whirling mass of gases thrown out from the sun, of such intense heat that no particle of matter could exist except in a gaseous state, this great ball of gas was infused with infinite powers, the power of electricity, the power of heat, and the power of motion. As this mass whirled through interstellar space, it slowly cooled and as it cooled it contracted, so that to these other powers was added the power of compression. Each minute particle of gas carried an electric charge, and these charged particles called electrons became associated together under the great pressure of the cooling mass and formed the atoms which we now designate as the chemical elements. Thus, it happened that an atom containing one single electron became an atom of hydrogen, while an atom containing ninety-two electrons was an atom of uranium, and the atoms of gold, iron, nitrogen or lead contained various numbers of electrons between these two figures. Every atom of matter therefore contains a definite number of electrons plus a large amount of the thermal, electral and mechanical forces which endowed the original gaseous mass. And these forces which were exerted in the make-up of matter as we now know it, are still locked up in the atom ready to be released by whoever will find the key to unlock them.

"THE makeup of matter in the multitude of its present forms did not stop with the formation of the atom, for atoms either of the same or of different kinds again entered into combination forming molecules. Water, for instance, is, as you know, made up of molecules each of which contains two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen. Infinitesimal as is the size of these atoms, their electrons circulate within them with lightning-like velocity and the same thing is true of each atom in the molecule. Every molecule is, therefore, a universe in miniature, in which the atoms represent the solar systems and the electrons play the part of planets. The universe, whether we consider it from the standpoint of the infinitely large or the infinitesimally small, exhibits the same plan, for size is after all, only a comparison of an object to ourselves and has no place in the arrangement of things when viewed from the impersonal standpoint.

"Thus far the science of chemistry has had to content itself with effecting changes in molecular structure. The molecule may be decomposed into its atoms and these atoms recombined almost at will. It is possible therefore, to make perfumes from coal-tar or glycerine from sewage, but in all the changes accomplished by the chemical industries the atoms remain as they were originally formed when the world was slowly evolving into being from its gaseous nebula.

"If we lay a piece of wood on the fire, the cellulose molecule is decomposed and the carbon and hydrogen atoms unite with the oxygen of the air, but the heat energy stored up in that stick of wood while its molecules were slowly forming under the action of years of sunlight, is released in a few minutes. The atoms however, remain unchanged, merely entering into new molecular combinations. What would happen if the infinitely greater stores of energy in the atoms were released? The atomic energy in a pound of coal would run an ocean liner for months, possibly for a year, where it now takes the molecular energy of tons of coal to turn the powerful engines for a single hour.

"There is however, another peculiarity of the atom with which I must acquaint you if the subject is not getting too boring." She signified her interest and begged him to proceed. "Electricity," he resumed, "in so far as we know and use it, is negative. The electrons in every atom are likewise negative. But each atom has a positively charged nucleus which acts like the sun in our solar system, and around it the planetary electrons revolve. This nucleus contains a positive electric charge equal to the negative charges of all of its planetary electrons combined. The electric charges in an atom are therefore neutralized and their opposite charges hold the atom together. There is one case of an unbalanced atom known to science, that is the radium atom, and it is in a continual process of decomposition, breaking down with little explosions which throw off some of its original characteristics. When an atom of radium has thus exploded five times, flung away five of its electronic charges, it becomes a substance which is indistinguishable from lead.

"For years this question of unlocking the energy stored in the atom has interested me as it has many other scientists. If a means could be found for producing positive electric energy, the forces which now bind the atom together might be thrown out of balance. This would disrupt the atom and release the energy stored in it. The production of such a positive ray became possible with the discovery of glorium, a substance whose atomic weight shows that it contains ninety-three electrons to each atom, and therefore, a larger nucleus carrying a greater positive electric charge than any other atom known. Glorium atoms, like those of radium, are unbalanced, and I have found a means whereby they may be disrupted at will. As the atoms disrupt, their nuclei shoot out into the path of a new type of ray. This ray has the shortest wave length known. It becomes saturated with the positive nuclei which are carried along at a velocity approaching that of light. When these nuclei collide with the atoms of oxygen or nitrogen in the air, the latter are unbalanced and explode, releasing the energy stored in them into the path of the ray. Thus the heat and electric energy of the ray is constantly increased. No substance can withstand the

bombardment of these positive nuclei. By means of it I have been able to dissolve steel, nickel——even a diamond——in an instant of time. In its attack on metals, where atoms are closely packed together, the reaction seems to increase in violence even outside of the path of the ray. It is as if one could shoot out millions of suns of larger size than any of the suns in celestial space; they would not only disintegrate every other body with which they came in contact, but would disrupt other solar systems outside of their path by drawing their planets into the path of bombardment."

"But," she faltered, "when this power is released, what will happen to the apparatus which generates the ray, and to this isleport and—to us?"

He was pleased with her keenness of insight, and replied; "That is a matter which cost me a great deal of thought. Its answer however, is not so difficult as it might seem. The enormous disintegration of glorium atoms, it might naturally appear, would soon use up the plates; but when one considers the countless millions of millions of atoms in one square centimeter of surface, and the relatively large size of the disks which give off nuclei from their whole surface, this feature becomes unimportant. There are several disks in operation at once, and the energy derived from this decomposition is carried off by the high velocity of the ray. It is only when the ray comes into contact with a dense material that its terrific destructive force is apparent. The energy then released does not come from the ray but from the atomic disintegration of the material under bombardment."

The afternoon sped swiftly away as he worked over the apparatus, stopping from time to time to explain to her some new mystery or to engage her mind over the intricacies of some device which had been perfected only after months of untiring labor. Sometimes as he talked to her, he stroked some piece of equipment with his hand, even as the master strokes the head of his favorite dog. She understood his feeling for this marvelous creation of his brain and hands and inwardly smiled at his act of unconscious devotion.

Near the close of the day they locked the laboratory and returned to the apartment. Both had come to look forward to their evenings together in the library. They talked of their varied interests, their likes and dislikes in art, music and philosophy; of literature and books, and of nature in her multiform expressions. Now and then a fleeting shadow crossed her mental vision as she thought of her interview that morning with Ravnowickz and of the double rôle she was required for a time to play. But most of our worries and troubles are caused by the narrow limits which circumscribe our senses. Were it possible for some sense of television to reveal to us the things that are transpiring just beyond the horizon of knowledge, our clouds would disappear. Had Kitty Cromwell been permitted to look out that night on the golf course, her shadows would have vanished and her heart would have thrilled at the sight of the ally who was championing the cause in which she felt herself to be Holden's sole supporter.

CHAPTER VII

Combat

JERRY SCOTT arose from a late afternoon nap and stretched into suppleness the sinewy muscles of his athletic figure. As he looked from the window of his room, the light of a brilliant afterglow was tinting the facets of the waves into paths of pink and gold. Soon the mantle of night would be cast over the waters and he loved night time with its tranquil spirit of mystery. He was never lonesome at night for when alone he philosophized, and philosophy evaluates life, interprets the unknown, and imparts an orderly sequence to actions. To think alone at night is to think clearly, and to think clearly is a gift enjoyed by very few. To one who stands thus solitary before the altar of nature, removed from the pettiness of human intrigue and the subtleties of ambition, there comes a readjustment of perspective, born of the immensity of that macrocosm in which our microcosm moves. For such an one, philosophy leads to paths of simplicity, unselfishness and wisdom. And it had so transpired that this alchemy of thought, instilled into his soul during his nocturnal rambles, had served to temper the turbulence and impetuosity of Jerry Scott's devil-may-care disposition, and had transmuted a predestined vagrant into a character whose unassuming simplicity and directness had won for him both homage and love from all who knew him.

But the mellowing effect of years and the fruits of philosophical thinking, had not carried in their train any relaxation of that masculine virility, which was ever ready to maintain the freedom of his indomitable spirit. To him the cause of a friend was his own cause and he knew full well that sooner or later it would be his privilege to match himself against the Austrian in Holden's behalf. How or when such a contest might arise, he knew not and cared not. Tonight he felt equal to any emergency that might be thrust upon him. He did not intend to force any issue with the spy, but he knew that the Austrian would not delay much longer to strike his blow at Holden.

It was dark as he stepped through the outer door of the hotel into the Palm Garden, and he paused for a few moments to give his eyes time to adjust themselves to the night. He wore a dark colored sweater in lieu of a coat, in order to give himself greater freedom of action and at the same time make himself more invisible. Groping his way along the hotel wall, he reached the ramp and descended two decks to the golf course. He could see more clearly now but still only for a few yards ahead. His first objective would be to locate the Austrian, then keep strict watch over his movements. There was little trouble to be expected from him by day, but by night he must be on guard, especially as the time for the Allied blow drew near.

It will be remembered that Number One Tee of the course, was located near to the front end of the hotel, and that the fairway crossed a ravine about fifty yards from this tee. The ramp coming up from the lower deck was situated on the opposite side of the hotel from this tee. Coming down from the deck above, Scott made a circuit of the hotel in order to assure himself that the spy had not yet ascended and as he rounded the bow-like front of the structure, he crashed forcibly into the heavy set frame of the man he sought. Both were propelled backward for an instant by the shock of the collision and there was a momentary pause during which each gathered himself together and regarded his antagonist through the darkness. Jerry Scott was quickest in recovering himself, but he remained alertly poised, not wishing to take the offensive until his antagonist's purpose was revealed. Then the spy's hand leapt from his pocket and Scott's eye caught through the gloom the glint of steel.

Jerry Scott during his wanderings, had picked up many tricks of offense and defense and among them were not a few of the famous *jiu jitsu* system which had been taught him by a Japanese master of the art.

To apply one of these was but second nature in such an emergency. Before his assailant's arm had even started to straighten out in order to bring his pistol into firing position, Scott sprang at him and grasped the spy's right wrist in his left hand. At the same instant his right hand shot out with terrific force, palm outward, in such a manner that his palm caught the back of the Austrian's pistol hand, bending it violently inward at the wrist which Scott held with a grasp of iron. This sudden inward flexing of the spy's hand automatically released his grip on the revolver which dropped from his inert fingers. Even as it fell toward the deck, a lucky kick of Scott's right foot caught it and propelled it through the air into a distant bunch of shrubbery. The infuriated Austrian tried to grapple with him but Scott sprang backwards out of the reach of those powerful arms, sensing full well the strength of his assailant, and they faced each other again on more equal terms.

The spy was a powerful man, heavily muscled through back, shoulders and arms. His was the muscular system of the bear; he could crush and break a man like an eggshell, but powerful muscles of this type are lacking in that pliant elasticity which is a prerequisite to scientific self-defense. In the coming combat he would depend on his strength; brains meant nothing to him, especially when, as in the present instance, he was enraged. His fighting instinct told him but one thing, and that was mastery through brute force. He would certainly underestimate his antagonist.

Jerry Scott on the other hand, had muscles of the pliability of whipcord. They were of the active type of the leopard. He was strong but his strength was dynamic. Moreover Scott was controlled by his brain rather than by his emotions, and he would proceed intelligently to seek out his enemy's weaknesses. His attack would overwhelm by its surprises; it would be varied from moment to moment and each variation would inflict some new source of pain on the body of his antagonist. Finally, Jerry Scott was a practised and proficient boxer who would waste none of his strength, but would make every blow count in the struggle for ultimate victory.

As the Austrian rushed in like an enraged Berserker, to grapple with his antagonist, Scott lightly side-stepped with the movement of a skillful boxer and sent a smashing right to the jaw of his antagonist; but the blow seemed only to anger his assailant, who paused only for an instant and came at him again swinging his long sledge hammer arms wildly like flails. To the boxer who has learned to lead and counter with a skillful opponent along the definite lines laid down for the art of self-defense, nothing is more disconcerting than the untrained movements of an antagonist who, utterly oblivious to the science of blow and parry, uses his arms as clubs to beat down the guard of his more scientific adversary with a total disregard of purpose or direction. Many a professional fighter's hopes have been wrecked in this manner by an unscientific but more rugged opponent. Scott knew full well that such a course would rapidly exhaust the spy, and if he could only evade those club-like blows, inflicting meanwhile sufficient punishment to keep the spy enraged, victory would ultimately be his. The light was becoming stronger as the moon neared its rising and the possibility of an accidental misstep would soon be removed.

AGAIN and again, the Austrian rushed at him with those wildly flailing arms and, as often as he did so, Scott side-stepped to right or left just in the nick of time, staggering his opponent as he did so, with hard jabs to the head. Time and again, he caught the spy on a certain spot on the jaw, which, he had reason to believe, would most quickly and effectually curtail his opponent's power of resistance. Once, as he side-stepped, a powerful swing of his opponent's fist struck and glanced off his left shoulder whisking him slightly off balance. The Austrian, seeing his advantage, unexpectedly made a dive to catch him round the legs. Scott jumped back a fraction too late, and both went down rolling over and over on the grassy fairway, but Jerry Scott was the quicker and managed to kick himself free from his opponent's uncertain grasp. Both were panting as they came to their feet again, for the pace had been terrific and there was no gong to sound a rest period. Scott however, had husbanded his strength and his superior strategem now began to tell in his favor. The moment for which he waited had now arrived and he took the offensive. Without giving his opponent a chance to catch his second wind, he rushed in and with the skill of long practice, uppercut through the Austrian's guard, landing a terrific blow on the point of the chin. His timing and placement were perfect and he noted that his enemy's knees sagged, but only for an instant. His opponent showed a surprising ability to take all the punishment Scott could give, but he knew that the end was approaching. He had learned through past experience never to exert himself beyond a certain limit; always to have something in reserve for a final effort, and this reserve now stood him in good stead.

During the combat, Scott had subsconsciously worked their position down the fairway toward the ravine. This bit of ring generalship was not premeditated by any definite thought; it was intuitively inspired by a knowledge of the ground and might, in case of necessity, be used either as offensive or defensive tactics. Suddenly he saw through the increasing light, the ravine falling away only a few yards behind his opponent. He rushed and his opponent gave ground step by step as the blows rained over his face and head, blows that lacked power, for Scott was not exerting himself now, but in every one there was a sufficient menace. The spy now stood within a yard of the steep bank of the ravine and Jerry Scott summoned all his reserve power for the final blow. Feinting with his left to open his opponent's guard, he stepped in and as he drove his right home, he raised himself on the ball of his foot swinging his body from the waist upward into a crashing blow, perfectly timed, and directed at just the right upward angle. The Austrian was fairly lifted off his feet, his hands dropped and his knees sagged beneath him, then he crumpled up and fell backward over the edge, rolling down over the jagged rocks until he lay limp, cut and bleeding at the bottom of the ravine.

Exhausted though he was, Scott made his way slowly down the ramp to the lower deck where he cut a piece of rope from the lashings of one of the life boats. Returning, he descended into the ravine and bound the hands of his still unconscious adversary, behind him. The moon had now risen and the face of the Austrian as he turned it up into the light, was fearfully cut and swollen. He ran his fingers through the beard covering over the jaw and said as if to himself:

"Thought I knew you. Don't usually forget a face." Then he seated himself on a nearby rock, lighted his pipe and waited for his captive's awakening.

That Scott had by this time fully recovered from his exertion, was an evidence of the excellent physical condition, which it was his habit to maintain to a degree seldom found save in the professional athlete. His life no less than his ideals demanded this, for

in the varied exigencies of his wandering career he was often called upon to endure extraordinary hardships. He had kept the pace with expert mountain climbers; was a swimmer of no mean attainments, and had joined in the arduous life of big game hunting in Africa. It had therefore become to him a matter of pride as well as satisfaction to ever maintain that physical condition which made him second to none in the emergencies of his adventurous life. He had received no hurt in his conflict with the Austrian save for a slight bruise on his shoulder, where the latter had struck him.

The spy moved and opened his eyes. He made a futile endeavor to raise his hand to his head, then realized for the first time that his hands were bound. He was dazed and shook his head from time to time to clear his muddled brain, then as the mind gradually cleared, his cunning reasserted itself and he tried to open conversation with his captor.

"A ferry great fighter. I could not haf pelief it in a gentleman of science and a so great student." Scott knew that the accent was unnecessary, was in fact an attempt to mislead him. The spy evidently labored under the delusion that his opponent was Bob Holden. Jerry decided not to enlighten him, so remained silent and smoked his pipe. The Austrian meantime had swiftly concocted his story and resumed the conversation.

"You surprise me. I tink I am left all alone on dis island. I stowavay to go to America. You tie me up. Mebbie you tink I do harm. Not to you enny more. Once try is enuff. But, tell me why do people all leaf?"

Scott was bored by the childish attempt to deceive him, so he knocked out his pipe on the rock, put it in his pocket and said: "Now listen, old timer. Don't try to bluff me. I know more about you than you'd care to listen to. You are a spy and came here to prepare this place as a base for the attack of the European Alliance on the United States." The Austrian showed his disappointment, and Scott continued: "Now knowing you and your purpose here, I'm going to take every precaution against your carrying out any of your plans. Get up."

He jerked the rope and administered a few light kicks to his prostrate foe. The Austrian complied grudgingly and arose stiffly to his feet. Placing his captive in front of him, Scott prodded him along the bottom of the ravine to a flight of steps which they ascended. He then conducted his captive in the same manner, to the hotel and into the private office of the manager. Here he ordered his captive to lie down on a couch in which position he bound him to the couch and left him. Leaving the room, Scott closed and locked the door, removed the key and placed it in his pocket.

JERRY SCOTT was well pleased with the outcome of his evening's adventure, although he would have preferred to defer the encounter, until the spy had disclosed more fully his plans or those of the Alliance. He felt somewhat perturbed when he considered, that by holding the spy captive, he would necessarily cut off the source of wireless information to the Alliance. This might make them suspicious and lead to the check-mating of Holden's plans, but there could be no step backward now. He considered going to Bob Holden's apartment to consult upon the situation. It was still early in the evening and there was now no longer need for his remaining in seclusion. Then there came to him the recollection of the previous night, when he had seen the spy retiring in the launch and with this visual reconstitution of the scene, he saw again the two revolvers that the spy had laid beside him. Then there came the thought that the spy might still be armed. This thought however, was quickly dismissed, for he remembered that he had, on binding the Austrian, almost subconsciously passed his hand over his assailant's pockets with that military sense of precaution acquired during his service in France, and which, once acquired, never deserts one in an emergency. Moreover, had the Austrian possessed any weapon, he had had abundant opportunity to use it during their encounter. Scott decided therefore, to have a look at the stowaway's retreat.

In the launch he struck a match and located the switch which turned on a storage battery light; then began a systematic search for the missing weapon. As already noted, the Austrian had arrived at the isleport without any baggage, but his overcoat lay neatly folded up on the cockpit cushions, and in searching through the pockets of this coat, Scott found a billfold containing some papers. Opening this, he searched through it for any notes or information and on a sheet of paper he found the message which, unknown to him had been so laboriously decoded by Bob Holden and Kitty Cromwell. The message was given in code together with the key word and decoded form. It was evidently the sheet on which the spy had worked out his message before going to the wireless room to send it. It explained much that Scott had before only hazily guessed at. The reference to "Nurse X" was particularly illuminating. The woman then, was not Bob Holden's wife, but for some unknown reason, his friend was under the care of a nurse. Scott felt that he should go immediately to Holden and inform him of the message, but if his friend were ill or even recuperating from some condition which made excitement inadvisable, the meeting should be deferred. After careful consideration, he decided that he would not disturb Holden that night. There was nothing in the message after all, which could not be reasonably delayed until the morrow. Its purport, together with his own appearance, would serve only to excite his friend who would stand in need of all the rest he could get until the time for the final test came; for Scott was certain that Holden's presence boded no good for the cause of the European Alliance. He would wait.

Finding nothing further of interest in his search of the stowaway's quarters, Scott returned to the scene of his early evening's combat and searched for the revolver of which he had so dextrously relieved the spy. A half hour's careful search of the ground foot by foot rewarded him, and he picked up the weapon from the spot where it had fallen in some rank grass beneath overhanging branches. It was a service weapon of the Lugger type. Withdrawing the shell clip he found it filled, and snapping it back into place, he dropped the weapon into his hip pocket.

In the now glorious light of the risen moon, he wandered over the golf course lost in wonder at the wealth of talent displayed in the layout. He stood on the tees and took fancied swings at an imaginary ball that caught the moonbeams as it sailed down the fairways now gloriously lighted by the filtered rays that distilled beneath the upper deck and through the leafy paradise. He ascended to the landing deck the better to view the glories of the heavens, and watched as Orion climbed the eastern skies and the milky way, like a gigantic skip-rope swung over his head; watched until his restless spirit succumbed to the harmony of the spheres bringing to him a sense of ineffable peace and quiet and the memories of nights spent in many a curious untravelled quarter of the globe. He heard with Rupert Brooke, "the calling of the moon, and

the whispering scents that strayed about the idle warm lagoon." On such a night had Cleopatra met Mark Anthony beside the Sphinx. Memory carried him back to a night when he too had wandered about the Theban Oracle and like Napoleon, had visualized the centuries that looked down upon him. On such a night had Lorenzo wooed Jessica in the Gardens of Portia at Belmont, with those immortal words, "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank." On such a night, Conrad's Lord Jim had seen the lunar orb hovering over the Red Sea like, "a shaving curled up from a plank of gold." How much of the wealth of history and literature was indebted to the same moonlight which now melted from his soul all traces of the conflict in which he had earlier engaged, all thought of that greater conflict soon to be launched upon this mid-ocean paradise. The red rays of Mars, traditional God of War, were tonight dissolved in the refulgence of that nearer neighbor in celestial space. Steeped in its peace loving emanescence, Jerry Scott wandered back to the Palm Garden where he had spent the previous night and, finding there the discarded steamer rug, wrapped himself in it, stretched out upon a grassy bank and was soon asleep.

He awoke toward morning with a dash of rain in his face. The wind was howling through the palms and the isleport was almost blotted out in the fury of the oncoming storm. Groping his way through the rain now falling in sheets, he reached the door opening into the hall on which his room was located. He entered his room, removed his drenched clothing, went to bed and slept until the morning.

When he finally arose, the storm continued with unabated fury. Making his way downward to the hotel kitchen, he prepared breakfast and after eating, placed hot coffee and sandwiches on a tray for his captive. Proceeding through the dining room to the office, he took from his pocket the key to the manager's office, and was about to unlock the door when he saw that it was ajar. He opened it to find the room empty.

CHAPTER VIII

A Key and Its Sequel

IT may well be that the philosopher Hobbes was right in his inexorable logic when he reasoned that an absolute monarchy was the most efficient form of government. Certain it is that if one admits his premises, his conclusions follow of necessity. That the rights of individuals are more and more conflicting in proportion to the congestion of population, is undoubtedly true, and it is for the adjustment of such conflicts of rights that we have our elaborate systems of courts and governments; but that such a conflict of rights inevitably leads toward war, a ruthless war of each individual against every other individual, may reasonably be doubted. That war, however, is the greatest catastrophe that can befall individuals or nations and is to be avoided at any cost, meets with our heartfelt approval. Having arrived at this point, Hobbes proceeds to demonstrate that the chief function of government is to prevent war; that the most effectual form of government is that form which most efficiently operates toward this end; and that inasmuch as absolute monarchy is most potent in this direction, it is therefore, the ideal form of government and is to be preferred above all other forms. But, whatever may be our ideas concerning the value of these conclusions, it must be admitted that the effectual abrogation of war by an individual would certainly bespeak for such an individual that fealty, which has traditionally been accorded to absolute rulers.

While it must be admitted that for Kitty Cromwell, the question of this or that type of government as a panacea for war was not one of any considerable importance, in fact it is to be doubted whether such a question had ever entered her mind, yet, it was certainly due to some comparable line of reasoning, that she had evolved her allegiance to Bob Holden as the man who, she believed was destined to abolish war for all time. But her allegiance to Holden the scientist, was daily expanding into a more personal interest in Holden the man. For between these two there had sprung into being a comradeship that absorbed, without negating, the logic that had given it birth. Without discounting the virtues of the Aristotelian logic, it is apparent to all who have struggled through the dry as bonedust system of the brilliant Athenian, that, like the much abused Platonic friendship of his predecessor, it must ever be subservient to the more dynamic forces of personality. And it had so transpired in the daily relations of Holden and Miss Cromwell, that this latter force was rapidly becoming dominant.

It is moreover, one of the happy attributes of personal interest that, beginning in any one of a thousand coincidents, it offers unlimited means for development through the progressive stages of concord, compatibility and congeniality into the rarer stages of friendship and affection. Into this royal road tinged with romance and accentuated by the jeopardy of their situation, Bob Holden and Kitty Cromwell had unconsciously entered; and among the many circumstances which had contributed to this elevation of their comradeship, none had more effectually conspired to bring about this mutual attachment than their conversations. For the art of conversation, an art, which like letter writing, is threatened with extinction in an age when anti-government cocktails, bridge and the abrogation of conventions have become the end, rather than the incidents of social intercourse among the intelligentsia, is one which lies at the roots of all human achievement. Shorn of its fruits, the human race would soon fall back upon its original atavistic tendencies. For while talking is an ability inherited along with the vermiform appendix, the thyroid gland, and the fissure of Rolando, the art of conversation which is based upon this more primitive acquirement, has to do with the expression of those finer distinctions of thought which lie at the base of all human progress.

To the casual observer, Kitty Cromwell may appear as a non-contributing member to the duologues in which Bob Holden usually took the leading part; but, inasmuch as conversation requires the incentive of a persuasive listener possessing broad interests and a thirst for knowledge, she was able to supply the incentive which lured him from the habitual taciturnity in which it had been his wont to hide from the purely inquisitive.

But the art of conversation is only a representative art whose ultimate limitations are to be found in the powers of mental discrimination which underlie it. For it is evident that no expression of ideas may exceed the ideas themselves, and the subtle use of words to express the finer shades of meaning must, in the final analysis, rest in the ability of the mind to perceive such differences. Conversation is expression, and just as the musician expresses himself in the interpretation of a fugue or rhapsody, or the artist puts his thoughts, his attitude toward life on his canvas, so the conversationalist must and does whether he wills it or not, express his evaluation of life's meanings. The question, therefore, of the value of conversation resolves itself into the more fundamental one of our evaluation of life; and this might be

interpreted by some natural classification which would certainly include the market value, the surface or superficial value, artistic, and scientific values. Such a classification may be illustrated by the attitudes of different individuals concerning perchance a flower, let us say an orchid.

To the admirer who attaches his engraved card and sends by special messenger to the subject of his devotion, the orchid is an expression of his adoration and thoughtfulness because it is the most expensive of flowers. To the woman who decorates herself with its glories, it represents the quintessence of taste and refinement; an outward and very visible sign of what, let us hope, is an inward and spiritual grace. To the artist, it is a symphony in color tones which defies his consummate skill to depict as he poises on tiptoe with bated breath, in the effort to caress into life the delicate tracery of veins and laciness of feathery texture which lie mellowed in its tinted pulchritude. Only the botanist may know the secret of the slippered door which closes after the entering bee, forcing him out through the cloistered arches at the base, in order that he may in so doing, rub his nose against the protruding anthers, thus gathering his load of pollen to be carried to the next flower and so complete the round of nature in her efforts to reproduce its kind.

There is nothing in the relation of the orchid to the corsage that is of fundamental value. Its rarity designates its market value, and its market value predicates its social prestige. But beyond this superficiality, orchids have fundamental values which lift them high in the scale of eminence, and it is in the appreciation of these deeper values that conversation is lifted out of the chit-chat of social intercourse into the eminence of an art.

As might be surmised, Bob Holden avoided conversation of the superficial type and it was this fact that had caused him to be looked upon as a silent man immersed in his science, and out of touch with the world. But among a select circle of intimates he was known as a brilliant conversationalist when stimulated by a responsive environment.

Kitty Cromwell had received a liberal education which had been augmented by an unusual breadth of experience. Her training had contributed to her well balanced mind, a scientific viewpoint, which was deepened by a natural instinct to prefer the real to the semblance. One of Emerson's illuminating gems of thought tells us, "God gives to every man the choice between truth and repose; choose whichever you will, you cannot have both"; and she had long ago made her choice. Her thirst for knowledge could never be satisfied, but it was not the thirst of the scholar who spends a life-time on some one of the insignificant problems of being, but that type of desire which sees in every thing a mystery to be unravelled, a new beauty to be unfolded. Life itself was ever an interesting adventure, and its disappointments, of which she had had a full share, had not sufficed to disillusion her, much less to cast her upon the rocks of cynicism or despair. While possessed of a happy disposition, she was not of the Polyanna type, for she had seen too much of life to believe that there was good in everything. Rather she sought reality whether good or evil, and once convinced that a thing was not worth while, she merely eliminated it from her field of interests. It had been impressed upon her during her early life, that happiness must come from within, that it was not so much a matter of the things one possesses as it was our reaction to the things which make up our environment. A life of unalloyed happiness is a chimera, for happiness, like gold, must be alloyed with baser metals to make it enduring.

To say, however, that Bob Holden found in Kitty Cromwell that type of character which offered a natural complement to his own, would smack of an idealism for which life, with its Babel of purposes, offers no justification. Both were individuals who had reasoned clearly upon the experiences which life had brought to them, and from the lessons learned, had developed a pragmatism which, in the intimacy of their present associations, offered a common ground where the flowers of their companionship might flourish.

DAWN of the day following that on which Ravnowickz had met Kitty Cromwell in the Garden, came reluctantly with a slow gray penetration of light through clouded skies and a steady down-pour of rain. The wind shrieked and howled through the structure and the sea was lashed by the tempest into a white foaming fury. It was the same storm that earlier had driven Jerry Scott from his bivouac in the Palm Garden to the shelter of his room.

Bob Holden and Kitty Cromwell had talked late on the preceding night, and the gray stormy day was not conducive to early rising. He knew moreover, that no apprehensions concerning the impending attack need worry them until after the storm had passed. He stepped from his room into the library to find that Miss Cromwell had preceded him and that breakfast was ready to serve. A half hour later he lighted his pipe and left for the laboratory. There was not much to be done there now except to wait, but he was always more at ease when surrounded by the paraphernalia of the realm over which he ruled.

As soon as he left the apartment, Kitty Cromwell went to the desk and began to rummage through a drawer that was used as a receptacle for a variety of knick-knacks. From it she selected a complicated looking key. Taking a small block of wood procured from a box in the store room, she smeared one of the surfaces with sealing wax heated in the flame of a candle, and while the wax was still soft, pressed the key into it, producing a clear impression of its surface grooves and notches. She took pains to make the impression as clear as possible and in every way strove to carry out the instructions of the spy to the letter, in order to deceive him into a complete acceptance of her rôle as accomplice. The impression was, to be sure, of no value, but would, she felt, be instrumental in postponing any action on his part for at least another day. Then she donned a slicker and souwester procured from a closet, and leaving the apartment made her way out into the Palm Garden. As she left the shelter of the hotel to cross the open area by the fountain, the wind almost swept her from her feet but she continued her way with care, clinging at times to any support that offered, as the gusts of wind tore at her. Finally she reached the shelter of the trees, deposited the block on the table indicated by the spy, and returned across the storm swept area to the apartment. Here she removed all traces of her wet garments, set the room in order, and spent the remainder of the morning in reading; looking out of the windows from time to time to see if the storm showed any signs of abating.

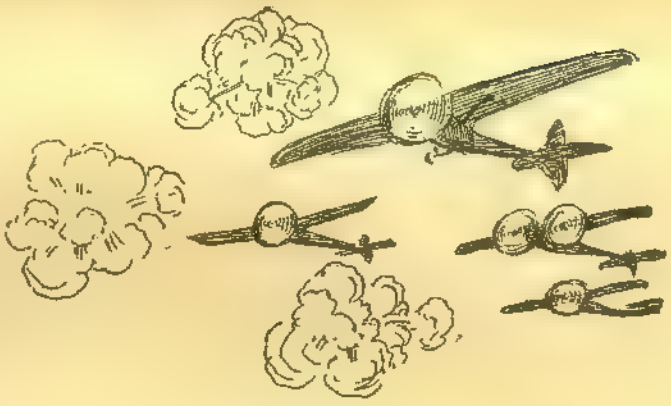
Holden responded to her call for lunch. He told her that during the morning he had been down to the pump room and had raised the isleport higher above the waves which had increased with the violence of the wind. This, he told her, he had intended doing in any event as they would be able to see an approaching fleet at a greater distance. He was certain that the storm would prevent any attack while it lasted, but should the skies clear during the day, they might look for the air fleet on the following

morning. They would naturally figure on making the crossing directly after such a blow, depending on a succeeding season of fair weather. Continuing he said, "I have been in the habit of locking myself in the laboratory and now that there is an enemy on the isleport, this course seems doubly warranted. But one thing has been troubling me, that is, I might have one of the old attacks and you would not be able to reach me."

He went to the desk and opening the drawer, selected a key which he handed to her, saying as he did so, "Here is a key to the hall leading into the laboratory quarters. Keep it with you for use in an emergency."

As she took it her heart almost ceased to beat and she paled visibly. By one of those coincidences which seem ever at hand to tangle the ways of life into a mystic maze of uncertainty, he had handed her the identical key from which she had that morning taken the impression. He noticed the change come over her and offered her a chair. But Kitty Cromwell had been schooled to action. She had a keen perception of a crisis and knew that nothing could be gained in such a situation by waiting mutely for the blow to fall. Holden might learn that she had betrayed a trust, but he must at all events, be warned against the consequences of her rash act. Dashing across the room, she took the slicker and souwester from the closet and put them on saying as she did so: "Please wait here until I return. I have something of the greatest importance to tell you."

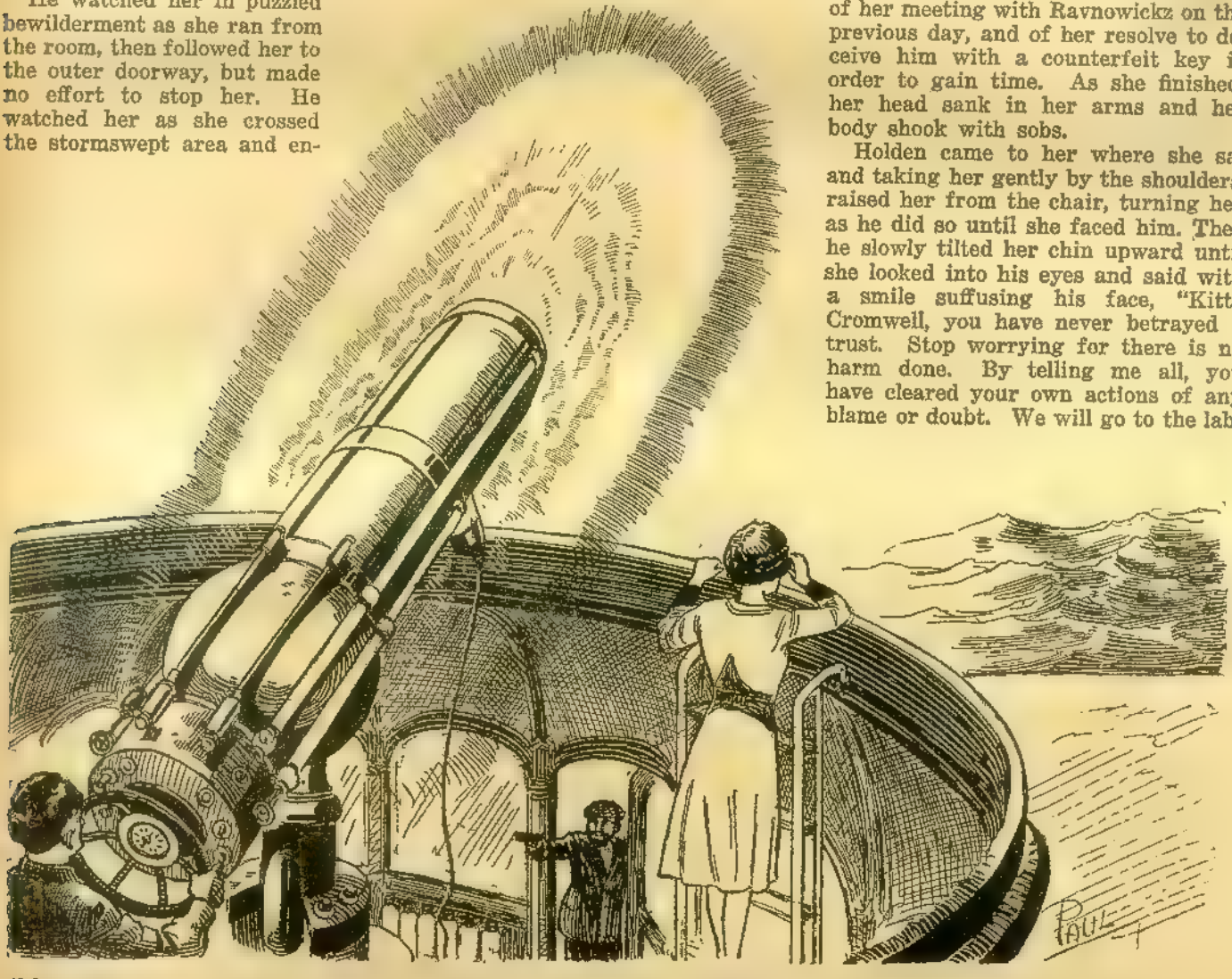
He watched her in puzzled bewilderment as she ran from the room, then followed her to the outer doorway, but made no effort to stop her. He watched her as she crossed the stormswept area and entered the woods beyond and still stood waiting anxiously for her return.



She reached the table only to find that the block of wood that she had placed there a few hours before, was gone. Then with faltering steps and downcast bearing, she returned. She uttered no word as he followed her into the library. Then a great weariness seized her and she dropped limply into a chair and said: "To think that I should have even unwittingly betrayed you."

He saw that she was deeply moved but could not comprehend the reason. Surely she must be laboring under some delusion. Then she told him all; how she had unconsciously been the tool of Dr. Von Sturm; of her meeting with Ravnowickz on the previous day, and of her resolve to deceive him with a counterfeit key in order to gain time. As she finished, her head sank in her arms and her body shook with sobs.

Holden came to her where she sat and taking her gently by the shoulders, raised her from the chair, turning her as he did so until she faced him. Then he slowly tilted her chin upward until she looked into his eyes and said with a smile suffusing his face, "Kitty Cromwell, you have never betrayed a trust. Stop worrying for there is no harm done. By telling me all, you have cleared your own actions of any blame or doubt. We will go to the lab-



Holden had a sickening sense at thought of the destruction he was about to accomplish . . . Ten miles, nine, eight; he aimed the tube, locked in the moving device and pressed and locked the pedal in position. A flash, a puff of smoke, then another and another. They were both so intent upon their work that they failed to notice a figure stealthily emerging from the ramp. . . .

oratory and put another lock on the door. I have one that I will guarantee against this Ravnowickz no matter how clever or ingenious he may be. We are going to outwit this spy and those who are behind him. But do not venture out on the isleport alone again."

Her face flushed and the tears stood in her eyes as she thanked him for his confidence and the courage he had given her to carry on. Then they went together to the laboratory and added the lock to the door. In his company her spirits returned and the troubled look gradually left her. About mid-afternoon the rain ceased and the sun broke through the clouds, and as they witnessed this transformation of nature, the last traces of the clouds that had cast their shadows within, were swept away.

How could they know that the lock was an unnecessary precaution; that her fears had all been groundless. For, less than a stone's throw away, Jerry Scott sat in his room wrestling hour after hour with the mystery of a block of wood containing a wax impression of a key, which had been deposited by Holden's nurse on a table in the Palm Garden in the midst of a torrential rain.

CHAPTER IX

Ravnowickz

WHEN Jerry Scott left the spy bound and locked in the inner office of the hotel, he did not reckon with the craftiness or ability of his antagonist. Reasonable consideration of the man whom the European Alliance had chosen for so important an enterprise as that entrusted to Ravnowickz, would have indicated that the spy was a man of unusual resources. His defeat of the spy in personal combat had led the usually cautious Scott into underestimating the sagacity and ability of his captive, a state of mind which has too often caused the downfall of the best laid plans. To men whose lives have been spent in outwitting the forces of law and order and to whom captivity is a menace ever lurking in the immediate offing, reflection, aided by a little practice, presents a multitude of expedients for release from whatever form of durance is imposed upon them. Alexandre Dumas relates how the Duc de Beaufort told his jailer that he had "often thought what he should do in case he were put into prison" and that "he had found out forty ways of escaping."

For one of such resources as those with which the spy was endowed, no form of restraint presents less difficulties of escape than that of binding the wrists and feet with cords, for reflection in an analytical manner will demonstrate that in order to overcome that restraint imposed by this form of bondage, it is necessary only to obtain the freedom of one hand. Complete freedom is then only a matter of the use of the free hand in undoing the remainder of the bonds. The annals of criminology are replete with instances of men, who by dint of constant practice from the flexible years of early childhood, have acquired the ability to fold up the hand, laying the thumb over the palm until it flattens along the line of the little finger in such a manner that the hand becomes as small in compass as the wrist. Under such circumstances, a bond placed about the wrist, when loosened slightly by working, will allow the hand to be withdrawn. A more sure method of binding is to bind the elbows close to the sides of the body, then bind the forearms and wrists, one in front and the other in back of the body, in such a manner that even though the bonds were loosened the hands could not be withdrawn. But Jerry Scott was not versed in the ways of the lawbreaker, and had not considered the possibility of his captive's escape. The famous Houdini had developed this trick to such marvelous perfection that handcuffs, which apparently fitted closely over the wrists, offered no obstacle to the withdrawal of the hand when folded up in the manner described.

With the checquered career of Ravnowickz, we are not concerned except to note that this trick was one at which he was an adept, and that it had stood him in good stead on numerous occasions. No sooner had Scott's footsteps died away after he had locked the door of the room in which his captive lay bound, than the spy began the slow straining at the ropes which he knew would eventually gain him his freedom. But in binding the spy, Scott had used the sailor's square knot which does not loosen under strain. Any flexibility obtained must be through the gradual stretching of the hempen fibre. Fully two hours had passed before he felt the pressure of the rope sufficiently relaxed to begin the painful process of withdrawal. His right wrist had swollen under the impact of the blow delivered by Scott when he had disarmed the spy at the beginning of their encounter, but while the sprain hindered him greatly in his efforts it also worked indirectly to his advantage, for the swollen wrist had prevented the rope from being drawn into as small a circumference as that about his uninjured wrist, and once the strain of the rope was relaxed about this injured member, the process of withdrawing the hand was facilitated. With the freedom of his right hand accomplished he rested for a time, working his fingers and hand to restore circulation in them before attacking the remaining bonds. With one free hand, the final extrication from his fetters was a matter requiring only a short time. The only bar to his freedom now lay in the locked door. He felt certain that his captor would not return before daybreak and, as the room was an inner one devoid of windows, he followed round the walls in the darkness until he arrived at the door. He had noted the position of the push-button for the lights when Scott had made use of it the night before, and found it without difficulty. The room was an oblong one of the size of an ordinary office and contained a desk, a table, couch and chairs. A large safe was built into an alcove, its door even with the wall of the room. He considered hiding himself in the safe in the hope that when his captor came and found the room empty, he would go away and leave the room unlocked. But on second thought he realized that the man whom he thought of as Holden, would quickly reason that he had not left the room and would institute a thorough search for him. He did not care again to engage in a combat with one who had already proven himself more than his equal, for he had gained a wholesome respect for the athletic prowess of the man he had encountered the previous night. He crossed the room to the door and made a careful examination of the lock. It was evidently a high grade of the mortised lock type, not of the tumbler or night latch variety. It must be locked or unlocked with a key and his adversary of the previous night had taken the key with him. It would be an interesting study for those practical savants of psychological thought, to determine the effect of one's early vocation on the tendencies of later life. Ravnowickz had, in early life been a locksmith's apprentice, a calling which opens into two avenues only slightly divergent at their beginning, but widening as they proceed, until their directions become opposite. It is one of those few trades wherein too great skill is an almost certain menace both to society and to the individual that plies it. The Japanese have a maxim to the effect that, "a perfect vase was ne'er turned out from a poor potter's wheel," while Americans claim that, "a good workman can use

a poor tool." In the absence of tools, Ravnowickz fell back on the American aphorism. First, he searched through the desk in the hope of finding a duplicate key, but finding none, his practiced eye fell upon a long metal pin affixed to a base and used as a file for papers. It could be bent to serve the purpose. The bending was accomplished by inserting the point in the crack left by the desk drawer, until it resembled the form of a skeleton key. With this implement he set to work upon the lock. It was a slow process; for it was necessary to feel out with great delicacy the inner structure of the lock, changing the form of the bends from time to time in order to conform the instrument to the work to be done. But at last he succeeded in lifting the dog which locked the bolt in place and at the same time he threw the bolt sufficiently to keep the dog displaced, then the bolt was turned back and the door was opened. He was free.

Ravnowickz knew that he must seek a hiding place where he could, while remaining himself unseen, command a view of the approaches. First, however, he descended cautiously to the motor launch and secured the revolver which he had hidden for safe keeping, in a small receptacle beneath the motor. Placing this in his coat pocket, he took his overcoat and some food from the stores in the launch, and passing through the pump and compressor rooms, came to the mechanician's bunk room on the lower floor of the hotel. This was a large room used as a sleeping and lounging room for the crew of mechanics which, under the regular routine of the isleport, had charge of the repairs and equipment. It resembled somewhat, the forecastle of an old-time sailing vessel, having the bunks arranged in tiers along the two sides of the room. Selecting an upper bunk at the far end of the room, commanding a view of the door, he climbed into it and was soon asleep.

JERRY SCOTT displayed a crestfallen countenance as he stood in the doorway of the room where he had left his captive bound on the previous night. He noted the loosened knots and ropes and realized that he had to deal with a man of unusual dexterity. The work was by no means that of a novice, and by what means the spy had succeeded in freeing himself from his bonds, Scott was at a loss to know. Inasmuch as the spy had undoubtedly possessed himself of the other revolver, it would be dangerous to attempt his recapture. It was better, therefore, to act on the defensive and take every possible means for protecting Holden from the Austrian. The spy would now have an additional incentive for action against his friend, inasmuch as he labored under the delusion that it was Holden who had made him a captive the night before. Scott had counted on revealing his presence to Holden this morning, but now, as on a number of previous occasions during the past few days, another obstacle had arisen to prevent it. His rôle clearly called upon him to retain his position as an unknown.

He returned the tray, on which was the breakfast he had brought to his whilom captive, to the hotel kitchen, then ascended through the hotel to his room. The storm was raging without so he pulled his chair alongside one of the windows where he could read, and at the same time keep an eye on the entrance to Holden's quarters. For a time he was engrossed in watching the sheets of rain as they swept across the open area near the fountain. He had sat there for an hour or more when he saw a figure in oil skins, emerge from the door and cross the open area. He knew by the movements that it was a woman and must therefore, be the nurse. She passed out of sight among the trees but soon returned and reentered the building. He wondered what mission could have led her to venture out in such a storm. It evidently must be a matter of great importance. He decided to investigate, so putting on his storm coat, he passed through the hotel and slipped out of the opposite side of the building then around the end beneath the overhanging observatory. Crossing the open area, he entered the woods and was passing a table when he espied a block of wood, apparently recently placed there, for it was not rain soaked. Picking it up, he discovered on the under side an impression of a key clearly defined in sealing wax. Here indeed was a new complication. Holden's companion had evidently placed the impression there for some one. That it was not for Bob Holden, was certain; equally certain that it was not for himself, inasmuch as his presence was unknown to anyone. For whom was it then except for Ravnowickz? He was loathe to believe that Holden had a spy in his own camp, yet there was the evidence, and try as he would he could not deny it. He now understood the reference to "Nurse X" in the code message. She was known to the Austrian and his coworkers by this symbol; moreover she had undoubtedly been in communication with the spy. The situation had suddenly become extremely complicated. There was a spy within and a spy without, and it would devolve solely upon him to keep them separated, to prevent any communication between them. He regretted now that he had not taken greater pains to incarcerate the spy more securely. To prevent their communication, meant a relentless watch over one of them at least, and in the circumstances it would be easier to watch the spy. Thus, there was forged another link in the chain of circumstances, that would keep him from revealing himself to his friend. Bob needed him now as never before, and the cause of America needed him. He pictured to himself the intrigue which had placed this woman near to Holden to report on his every action, and he wondered how much she knew of his experiments and of the plans he had consummated to thwart the enemy. He felt certain that since that night when he had seen the spy enter the wireless room, no further messages had been sent. Following the sending of that message, he had shadowed the spy to the launch and on last night had made him a captive. In all probability, Ravnowickz had been on his way to the wireless room last night when they met on the golf course. It was possible, to be sure, that the spy had sent a message after he had broken his captivity early that morning. Scott doubted this however. His escape had been a matter which had undoubtedly occupied him for some considerable time. Then the thought came that the spy might have had assistance. But this was discarded as improbable for it was not possible for the nurse to have known of the captivity of her ally.

Jerry Scott spent the remainder of that day in his room. Shortly after noon he was surprised to see the nurse emerge a second time from the doorway and again cross the open area only to return a few minutes later. He could not, from where he sat, see Bob Holden, who stood a little back from the open door. Scott was infuriated at what he thought to be the deception of this woman. He again donned his coat and hat, and made his way out into the Palm Garden to the table where he expected to find some message for the spy, but he found nothing. He searched the surroundings but the search was unavailing so he returned to his room. He was nonplussed to account for this second appearance. It did not fit in with any rational explanation. Why should she have made that second trip through the storm unless,—yes, that was it; she wanted to be certain that the spy had taken

the block with the key impression. She was afraid that possibly Holden might discover it. He took the block from his pocket and examined it more closely. Then he went out into the hall and up to the next floor, finally stopping before the door that opened from the hall of Holden's apartment into the hotel hallway. The door was securely fastened. He doubted if it were ever used. He compared the key impression with the lock on the door but found no similarity. The key was that of a complicated form of tumbler lock while that required for the door was of a different type. He next went back to his room and putting on his coat and hat, went out and around the hotel to the outer door to the apartment. Here he made another comparison as to the key, but with like results. The key impression must therefore, apply to some door within the apartment, probably to the door into the laboratories. The spy evidently had a means of ingress through the outer door, or it would be opened for him from within. Well, he and not the spy had the pattern of the key.

With the coming of night, Scott put on his sweater and sallied forth. He crossed the open area to the edge of the palms, and placed a bench under a convenient cover of overhanging shrubbery. This afforded him an unobstructed view of the door across the open space, where he could see without being seen. The rain had made the air damp and chilly so he returned to his room and procured a steamer rug to wrap about him. The ocean had subsided with the falling of the wind, and he noticed that the isleport rode higher above the rollers. Could this be the result of some automatic provision that raised it above the reach of the storm-tossed waves or had it been raised by Holden for some other purpose? The attack, he felt certain, was near at hand and Holden was unquestionably taking every precaution and making final preparations for his master stroke against the militant forces of Europe.

THE night dragged slowly along. Occasionally the chirrup of a cricket waked the echoes of the wood, or a bird stirred uneasily in the branches. Jerry Scott breathed with deep regularity, but he was not asleep. Through his stream of consciousness trouped the images of the past; the scenes of war and the friendships of peace mingling incongruously in the stream as it carried on. Now he drifted over a tropic isle to the whirring beat of an airplane propellor; anon he painted. He often painted in his dreams and semi-conscious visions, and always it was the head with the winsome blue eyes and the raven hair, but just as he tried to catch the elusive charm, it faded and vanished. He was not asleep but he had learned the art of jungle rest—rest that leaves the mind tuned to arouse the body at the subconscious perception of danger. The moon had risen behind banks of fleecy clouds and barely lighted the wall of the hotel, wrapping it rather in a dark gray mysteriousness which to eyes unaccustomed to the darkness would have been black as Erebus.

Suddenly he raised himself on his elbow and peered through the shelter of his leafy bower. Automatically his hand drew the revolver from his pocket. A dark shadow was gliding stealthily along the wall, pausing from time to time to listen, then slipping along again with noiseless tread. Before the door to Holden's quarters it paused and knelt before the lock. Then he saw the clear round ray from a pocket flash light. At intervals he could hear a faint rattling as of a key or tools. He considered taking a pot shot at the spy. It was war, but his sportsman's instinct revolted at the thought of shooting a man in the back. Then too he wondered if the nurse would appear to hold midnight converse with her ally. He would wait and see. A window above and to the right of the door opened stealthily. Scott could hardly repress the feeling of indignation that boiled within him. They would meet, these two, in order to plot against his friend. Well, he would see to it that there was not much plotting done. He leveled his revolver at the spy. Then on the stillness of the air a shot rang out. He watched the would be house breaker as he fled precipitately around the end of the hotel through the overhanging archway. Then he saw through the open window a room suddenly flooded with light and heard a woman's voice answering to Holden's call. Dim in the distance he saw a figure in dressing gown cross the room and open the door, and he knew that it was the nurse who had fired at Ravnowickz.

Jerry Scott had an analytical mind. Those conclusions often attributed to the much overworked faculty of intuition, came to him in a far more logical manner. Thus, it had transpired, that of the various events taking place on the isleport, he had arrived at the true significance of all save in the one matter of his classification of Kitty Cromwell as an ally of the Austrian. His error in this one instance was but natural and was therefore pardonable, and all the more so, in that he had never seen her face nor had any communication with her, for it is harder to misjudge those we know than those who are strangers to us. It is possible that a more intimate knowledge of feminine psychology would have caused him to hesitate before forming any conclusion however sustained by appearances. In his favor however, be it said, that in his varied wandering career, he had probably seen more of woman at her worst than at her best. Yet he had never become convinced of the justice of the Kiplingesque version. To say the least, he was now in a quandary. He felt that somewhere his analysis had slipped a cog. It was obviously unreasonable that the same woman who, earlier in the day, had provided an ally with a key, should shoot at him when he attempted to pick a lock. Yet these were the facts which demanded an explanation and try as he might, he could find no solution to the riddle. That the nurse was aware of the identity of the man at whom she had fired, could not be doubted, as so far as she knew, the Austrian was the only person on the isleport with the exception of herself and Holden. In the light of the earlier experiences of that day, the shooting was deliberately incongruous. From the standpoint of the shooting, why had she provided him with the impression of the key? There certainly must have been some earlier collusion between them. But summing up all the evidence, the affair of the key was decidedly circumstantial, while the shooting was a fact, the obvious intention of which it was impossible to deny. In fairness to her therefore, he must take the shooting as an indication of her real attitude toward the spy. This view made his own work easier and gave to him a greater peace of mind.

With this problem settled, even though it lacked a reasonable explanation, he rolled the blanket about him and stretched himself upon the bench. He would remain there for a few hours to see if anything further happened and if not would go to his room. In his reaction to the excitement and the lightening of his burden of anxiety for Holden, he soon found rest and sleep. It was nearly morning when he rose from the bench and sought his bed. Long before that hour, some twelve hundred miles to eastward, the camp of the enemy was astir and the plateau which he had viewed from a distance a few days before, resounded with the whir of planes. The attack on America was under way.

CHAPTER X

Exit—Ravnowickz

MORNING dawned bright and clear. All traces of yesterday's storm was banished in the dancing sunbeams of a new day. The rollers having spent themselves in their mad race, now came in steady succession grouping themselves in triads with slightly lengthened pauses between group and group. The birds sang in the trees and nature was bathed in peace.

Breakfast on the isleport. In the apartment, Holden and Kitty Cromwell talked on the spy and his midnight escapade. "Can't see how I missed him," she said, "but he certainly had a surprise. Lock-picking must be a favorite occupation with him. I wonder that he even asked for a key impression to the laboratory."

"It is as well that you missed him," replied Holden, "for it will be a lesson to him. Even though we are at war it seems rather personal to kill a man when not in the heat of battle. You see I am not much of a killer. I know that I shall have plenty of it to do, but my war experience was not on the fighting front."

"I hate it all," she answered, "but I know that the success of your plans will never be assured until this Ravnowickz is put beyond the power to do you harm. For the ultimate success of the thing you would do, I would gladly kill him."

In his upper bunk in the mechanician's room, the subject of their conversation lay nursing a slight flesh wound in his left hand where a bullet, after perforating his cap and missing his head only by the fraction of an inch, had halted the application of his lock-picking prowess. He was angry, but had he known who fired the shot, the vials of his wrath would have choked him as he munched the remnants of food secured from the locker of the launch.

In the hotel kitchen, Jerry Scott wrestled with the enigma of a shot fired by one whom he had only yesterday accounted as an ally of the spy, while he busied himself in the exercise of his culinary skill.

Breakfast over, Bob Holden insisted that Miss Cromwell accompany him into the laboratory. He would not allow her again to run the risk of meeting their enemy. Moreover, he felt that this day would bring about the culmination of that for which they so anxiously waited. They had been in the observatory but a short time when a small buzzer attached to a microphone detector announced the distant approach of airplanes. Holden stepped to the small table on which the microphone rested, and adjusted a pair of head-phones to his ears. He slowly turned a dial and presently announced the approach of a fleet of several planes from the East. In some twenty or thirty minutes they would be in sight.

With the same calm assurance that she had noted in his actions on the day he had saved the isleport from sinking, he now set about making the final preparations for his master stroke against the Kingdom of Mars. He threw a switch that started a motor and slowly and steadily she saw the great leaves which formed the semi-spherical dome, open and roll aside, folding themselves downward into the sides of the room until the entire top was opened to a level with the landing deck. Still other switches turned on series of turbines in the tubes, which were not ordinarily used for the routine power requirements, until the entire power equipment of the isleport was running and available for use in the positive ray. He next turned the current through the bank of vacuum tubes, adjusting it until they showed just the right uniform glow, watching as he did so a number of meters in order to obtain the necessary balance and steadiness. Again she noted that his hand often lingered on some piece of apparatus, caressing it as she had often seen soldiers stroke some favorite rifle or machine gun, in mute expression of their faith in and reliance upon the implement of destruction.

The wind was blowing steadily from the northeast and the isleport had swung with it so that the bow-shaped end of the hotel and the circular room faced in that direction. The cable which attached the isleport to the buoy was augmented by an additional cable from each end of the isleport to the buoy. By taking up on either of these auxiliary cables by means of a winch, the structure could be swung so as to quarter the wind. In the present position however, the attacking planes coming from the direction of the Azores, would approach the isleport at an angle of about forty-five degrees from the long side of the structure.

With everything tuned for the impending attack they waited, listening from time to time to the advancing planes with the head-phones. Suddenly he took her by the hand and led her back into the laboratory where he gathered up an armful of coats and blankets. "We will need these," he said, "for it will be cold. The action of the ray draws the heat from the surrounding air into its path. Near to the point where it meets with a dense material the heat would be intolerable, but that will be far away."

Back again in the observatory they mounted the operating platform. He explained to her the simple method of sighting the tube and showed her the pedal which, when pressed downward, connected the power through a series of rheostats to the tube. For great distance or increased power, the pedal should be pressed clear down. She wondered vaguely whether it would work; it was all so involved yet so simple in its operation. It was hardly more revolutionary however, than his isleport scheme must have appeared when first proposed, and her confidence in him was supreme.

Then far away to the eastward a speck floated out of the gray for an instant into the sunlight. Under ordinary circumstances, it might have been a ray of sunlight flashing from the white wings of a gull. Holden picked up a pair of binoculars, focussed them, then slowly swept the heavens from side to side, pausing at intervals as he did so. His hand showed no slightest tremor, but his voice vibrated with something more akin to eagerness than excitement as he passed the glasses to her saying; "It is the first squadron of scout planes—ten in all."

Little by little the planes emerged from the eastern sky, taking on more definiteness of form as they did so. On and on they came until their arrow-like formation was distinguishable. Like a flock of wild geese they flew, to right and left of their leader, each plane stepped back in order to give those ahead room for change of speed or direction without the possibility of mishap.

Holden had once hunted partridges in the Northwest, and had learned that a flock treed at dusk may all be bagged if the lowest bird is picked off first, then the next higher. By this means the falling of a bird from the tree does not disturb the other birds above it. It had been his intention to take the leading plane first, but by some peculiar operation of the subconscious mind, this hunting experience now came to mind. He would let the leaders come on without any knowledge of the fate of those behind.

They were flying at an altitude of about three thousand feet and had reached a distance of nine or ten miles from the isleport, when he suddenly sprang into action. Sighting the tube at the outermost plane on the left of the fan shaped line, he stepped on the

Holden . . . announced the approach of the second division of airplanes. Scott mounted the pedestal and in an instant Kitty Cromwell was beside him They had not long to wait . . . Jerry Scott marvelled at the silent destruction that followed; a rapid succession of flashes—a few wisps of smoke floating away on the breeze—just an instant of time, then nothingness

pedal. The air about them was filled with an acrid ozonizing odor; a path of faintly violet tinted light reached out from the tube in the direction of the distant plane. Out where the plane had been, there was a soundless flash and a patch of white smoke drifted lazily on the wind like a small feathery cloud, but the place of the winged messenger of war was empty. There was no falling of debris, no buckling of wings or stays; just an instantaneous change of matter back into the original gases from which, aeons ago, it had been formed.

HOLDEN hardly waited to note these effects. He saw only that the plane had vanished, then swung the tube to the other end of the line to catch the plane farthest in the rear. There was no instant of waiting, no moment between action and result. Simultaneous with the pressure on the pedal, came the flash, the puff of white smoke, and the space where a moment before a mighty bird had flown, was a void.

On and on came the squadron, and as they came Holden swung the tube from side to side with noiseless precision and deadly accuracy. With each swing came the pressure of the foot, the flash and puff of smoke. The leaders were unaware of the fate of those following. Their eyes were fixed on the tranquil appearing isle ahead, their thoughts conjured up no vision of the destruction awaiting them. On and on they came, and as they came they vanished one by one until the leader alone was left. Suddenly the pilot had a premonition of something wrong and looked around. He was all alone. Had he outdistanced his comrades? He banked his plane wheeling to right, but too late. Came the pressure on that pedal and the sky was clear save for some little patches of white smoke that marked the effacement of the squadron.

The conflict had lasted but a few minutes, but during its progress there had come an ever increasing draught of cold air as the heat from the surrounding atmosphere was drawn into the path of the ray. In the excitement of the conflict, they had failed to notice the benumbing cold, but now Holden grabbed a blanket and wrapped it about her and put on a heavy jacket and gloves. All about them the isleport had taken on a coating of hoar-frost. But with the cessation of the ray there came with equal suddenness the melting of the frost in the warm rays of the sun.

THE allies had made thorough plans for their *coup* against America. Landing fields had been constructed both on Fayal and St. Michaels, and immense stores of oil, petrol and other supplies had been gathered. Tank boats were already on their way with supplies for the isleport base. The work had been carried on as already noted, under the guise of agricultural developments. With the inauguration of war, a thousand planes had set out from various parts of Europe for their point of mobilization in the Azores. In the plans of the European Alliance, Isleport Number Two was a key position of the highest importance. Since the record breaking flight of Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh in 1927, there had been hundreds of similarly successful crossings, but there had also been numerous disasters. The use of large many-motored planes however, had made the passage relatively safe, but until the launching of the isleport enterprise, the problem of fuel carriage had been one of the greatest obstacles. In the matter of the attack now to be made on America, a mid-ocean base was of paramount importance. It would be necessary to send out several divisions of planes each day which, after bombing the seaboard cities, would return to their isleport base to replenish their store of ammunition and fuel. Not less than a thousand planes would be thus engaged, but it was a foregone conclusion that many of these would be lost and a constant source of replacement must be provided. The European Alliance had mobilized five thousand planes for this purpose which were distributed thus; a thousand on the fighting front; another thousand in the Azores; and the balance to be drawn on as needed from the reserves in Europe.

On the third or fourth day after the first attack on the seaboard cities, a combined air and naval attack would be made on New York. The reduction of a few cities such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington it was thought, would bring about a hasty armistice and peace. In order to launch the attack, the planes were to leave the Azores for Isleport Number Two, in the following order. First, a squadron of ten scout planes to prepare the isleport. Following these, a half hour later, a full division of fifty planes including ten large bombers. Finally, at intervals of two hours, four more divisions of fifty planes each. This would give time for lowering the planes from the landing deck and storing them on the decks below. The landing deck was equipped with derricks for the hoisting and lowering of planes, also with catapults for starting them off. Most of the planes were equipped for landing either in water or on the land, but the landing deck presented less difficulties and would be used to full capacity. On the second day it was planned to send fifteen more divisions to the isleport thus making up the full fighting force of a thousand planes. A naval squadron was also timed to arrive on the second day and would include a number of aircraft motherships which would aid in operations at the front and provide storage for a number of planes as well as means for the repair of minor injuries.

Bob Holden had no certain knowledge of the stupendous scale of operations planned by the European Alliance, but none were more familiar than he with the aircraft resources of Europe and he had calculated with remarkable precision, the details of the attack. Thus, he reasoned that the squadron of scout planes would be followed shortly by a larger division and that the work was only begun when the first squadron was destroyed. In the interval following the annihilation of the scout squadron, he was busy making readjustments in the apparatus in order to conserve as much power as possible. As long as the wind continued at its present rate the supply was sufficient for the requirements, but he did not care to be thrown too quickly upon his storage battery reserve. He knew that the larger division which would follow would require greater power as the tube would be in operation during a longer period of time. In case of necessity, he could of course let them come closer and cut down the power by decreasing the range. Such a procedure however, would expose the isleport to the enemies' machine guns and must unquestionably place in jeopardy the outcome of the war.

Ten minutes sped quickly by and then to the anxious watchers, a group of small specks appeared almost simultaneously in the eastern sky. A few minutes and the group had spread out fan like as those farther away came into view. Their formation was like that of the previous squadron except that the heavier bombing planes were concealed behind the center of the wedge in a position where they would be protected by the attack planes.

Holden now perceived that the plan of attack which he had followed in dealing with the scout squadron would not be feasible in meeting the attack of this larger division. The positive ray tube was provided

with an automatic moving device which acted on the pivot of the tube, moving it through an arc from left to right or vice versa in much the same manner as that on an astronomical telescope which may be set to follow a star throughout the night. This mechanism, when thrown into gear, moved the tube almost imperceptibly, sweeping the ray through a segment of space and destroying everything in the vertical plane through which it passed. For while the ray was concentrated along parallel lines, it spread out slightly in the vertical plane. An inch of movement of the tube on the circumference of its twelve inch disk, would sweep the ray through a six mile arc at a distance of ten miles from the isleport, and this movement would take approximately two minutes to accomplish.

HOLDEN now decided to aim the tube slightly to the left of the outermost plane and engage the gears of the moving device. Then as he pressed the pedal down, a slight motion to the side would lock it in place until released, and the ray would be in continuous action during the time it was thus locked. The perpendicular spreading out of the ray would prevent a plane from escaping it by diving or seeking higher altitudes. The division was now in full view, and he decided that it would be necessary to let the foremost plane approach to within about eight miles before beginning the attack. He knew that they carried no guns that could reach the isleport at more than five miles even though they desired to do so. They would naturally expect that the scout division had made a landing and stowed away their planes on the decks below, and would entertain no suspicion that the isleport was in the hands of an enemy. But in the event that they became warned through the destruction of their planes, and should open fire on the defenders, the automatic moving device would enable Holden and Kitty Cromwell to seek shelter behind the light steel wall of the circular room.

On they came, a magnificent sight, thrilling with potential power; a flock of birds carrying with them the elements of human destiny. Holden had a sickening sense at thought of the destruction he was about to accomplish, but he set his teeth and hardened himself with the counter thought of the destruction of defenseless women and children, which it was their mission to consummate, and which he alone could frustrate. Ten miles, nine, eight; he aimed the tube, locked in the moving device and pressed and locked the pedal in position. A flash, a puff of smoke, then another and another.

They were both so intent upon their work that they failed to notice a figure stealthily emerging from the ramp on the landing deck some thirty yards in their rear. Barely half a minute had elapsed after Holden locked in the pedal, thirty seconds during which the low hum of whirring propellors was carried faintly to them on the wind. Suddenly the nearer air was broken by a shot and Bob Holden dropped to the platform. Kitty Cromwell's revolver was in her hand as she wheeled to face Ravnowickz coming over the landing deck but quickly as she fired, her shot was as the echo to another report from the direction of the ramp.

Ravnowickz' revolver dropped from his relaxing fingers and his hand clutched his breast. Slowly he spun round with sagging knees, lurching as he did so nearer and nearer to the edge of the landing deck. Then with a final plunge, he hung for half a second over the edge and, as his muscles stiffened, the body balanced over and was carried down into the ocean far below.

CHAPTER XI

Scott Renews a Friendship

ON the morning of the first day's battle, Scott and Ravnowickz were each in the lower part of the structure, while the defeat of the scout squadron was being silently accomplished by Holden in the circular room. On his way down to the hotel kitchen where he breakfasted, Scott had left the hotel and slipped silently around the outer door of Holden's apartment to search for any visible signs of the Austrian's midnight escapade. He found a few drops of blood on the door sill but reasoned that inasmuch as Ravnowickz had run away, he was not seriously disabled. The spy had undoubtedly received a warning that would keep him in hiding until the time for the attack. Following out his plan of keeping watch over the spy, immediately after his breakfast, Jerry Scott secreted himself in one of the sand traps on the golf course where he could keep watch of the ramp leading to the upper decks. Here he stretched himself on one of the banks peering over the edge through a cluster of branches that fringed the upper surface.

The warm sunshine was slanting in at the sides of the structure drying up the moisture left by the storm of the preceding day. Suddenly as he lay there, he became chilled to the marrow and at the same time there came to him the odor of ozone that is characteristic of violent electric discharges. As he pondered over whether to leave his hiding place in search of warmer clothing, there came a coating of frost that covered the grass and all parts of the structure. Marveling at this sudden glacial temperature, his first thought was that an iceberg was approaching. This idea was promptly dismissed, however, as it was not the season for bergs and, in any case, the isleport was protected against them at all seasons by the warm waters of the Gulf Stream to the North of it. The cold passed as quickly as it had come and the frost disappeared almost instantaneously. Astounded by this vagary in the program of nature, Scott again crouched in his covert. In vain he strove to account for it. It could hardly be a work of nature; it must be in some way connected with Bob Holden. He knew the immeasurable resources of the man; knew that he was preparing to unsheath some prodigious weapon of science against the powers of Europe; knew also that, whatever be the nature of his *coup*, it would be an unheralded use of forces as yet unknown to science. Holden had probably been giving his apparatus a final test and this subversion of elemental forces was a product or a by-product of the forces he had harnessed from the ether of space.

He lay there for fully twenty minutes after the frost had melted, thinking over these matters and watching at the same time, the ascent from the lower deck. He was aroused from his thoughts by a tautening of the muscles for he had experienced that indefinable sensation not to be ascribed definitely to the action of any particular sense; a feeling as of footsteps coming stealthily up the ramp. His alert senses were quickly justified, for as he looked, there appeared first the head, then the shoulders, then the full form of the Austrian. As he reached the deck he turned and walked straight toward where Scott lay concealed until he reached the bottom of the ascent to the third deck. Turning, he ascended the ramp on tip-toe to the deck above. Scott noted that his left hand was bound up in a handkerchief, the right hand he carried in the pocket of his coat. No sooner had he passed from sight on the deck above, than Scott followed. In his hand he carried the Lugger pistol ready for instant action. Following his quarry, Scott shortened the dis-

tance between them as they approached the landing deck. For a second time during the last twenty-four hours he was strongly tempted to shoot, but could not bring himself to the point of shooting even this enemy in the back, except as a last resort. He felt, moreover, that he had the situation well in hand, as he was in a position to thwart any attempt of the spy directed against his friend. But Scott did not know of the real situation on the landing deck; of the defeated squadron or the oncoming division of airplanes. Nor was he aware of the exposed position of Bob Holden on the operating platform, inasmuch as he had never seen the dome opened or known of anything connected with the inner arrangement of the circular room.

As the head and shoulders of the spy rose above the level of the landing deck, Scott, who was stealing up the ramp behind him, saw him crouch low and at the same moment there came to his ears the unmistakable hum of distant airplanes. The destruction which Ravnowickz saw already in progress as he reached the landing deck, was responsible for his abrupt action. From his position now half way up the ramp, Scott saw his quarry suddenly rise upright and, simultaneously with the movement, his hand shot forward from his pocket, and Jerry sensed that the hand contained a weapon. The bark of the spy's automatic was echoed by that of Jerry Scott's, and his in turn was re-echoed from the opposite side. As he ran with long strides up the ramp, he saw Ravnowickz take his headlong plunge over the edge; another moment and he was standing at the edge of the circular room.

Dazed at the rapidity of the events of the last few moments; his mind swamped by the avalanche of sensory impressions, each separate phase of the scene left a concrete and indelible picture upon his mind. He saw the tube with its violet tinted ray reaching out into the offing. Far in the distance airplanes were being dissolved, one by one, into the void; a flash and a little white cloud, then nothingness; this repeated over and over again with the rapidity of machine gun fire. Down in the well, a woman sustained the head of Bob Holden on her lap as she sobbed out his name and covered his forehead and lips with kisses. As he leaped to the platform beside them, she turned her face upward toward him, and only the railing saved him from falling as he staggered backward.

"My God,—Kathleen Riley,—how,—where did you come from?" She looked at him for a moment, then brushed her hand across her eyes as if to wipe away an illusion of the senses. Then she said, "You,—Jerry?"

Holden's eyes opened and stared questioningly at Jerry Scott. Then rousing himself as if by a supreme effort, he said, "the airplanes." They looked and the sky was clear. All had vanished. With clearing consciousness, Holden spoke again, "the pedal—quick—don't waste power."

Kitty Cromwell grasped his meaning not clear to Scott, and disengaged the pedal and moving device. She then proceeded to examine Holden's wound. The bullet had entered high up behind the left shoulder-blade, passing through the shoulder and out of the left breast. The shock of the bullet had made him unconscious. Holden refused to be taken to his room so they propped up his head on some blankets and went to the laboratory from which they brought a couch and first aid case. In the laboratory, she laid a hand upon his arm and said, "Jerry, I have taken my mother's maiden name of Kitty Cromwell and that is the one by which Bob knows me." He nodded in assent; they had no time for further talk at present.

RETURNING to the circular room, Jerry picked up his friend from where he lay on the platform, and tenderly carried him down the steps where he laid him on the couch. Here they cut away the clothing from the wound and Kitty Cromwell dressed and bandaged it as well as the conditions would permit. Holden was still suffering severely from the shock of the bullet, so she administered a hypodermic of glycerine subnitrate to stimulate his heart action. Then, propped up on pillows and wrapped in blankets, Holden gave directions for their preparations to meet the attack of the next division. They would still have, in all probability, an hour or more in which to make ready. Meantime, he would have an explanation for the sudden appearance of his friend.

Jerry explained briefly how he had followed Ravnowickz from Budapest to the isleport, and how on various occasions, he had been deterred from making his presence known to them; he went into but few details, however, and was careful to conceal any account of his suspicions of Kitty Cromwell. He told of the experiences of that morning leading up to the death of the spy, then turning to her he said: "Every time I shoot an Austrian, I meet you. This is the second time and it happaned to be the same Austrian."

"But how," she queried, "you do not mean that this Ravnowickz was—"

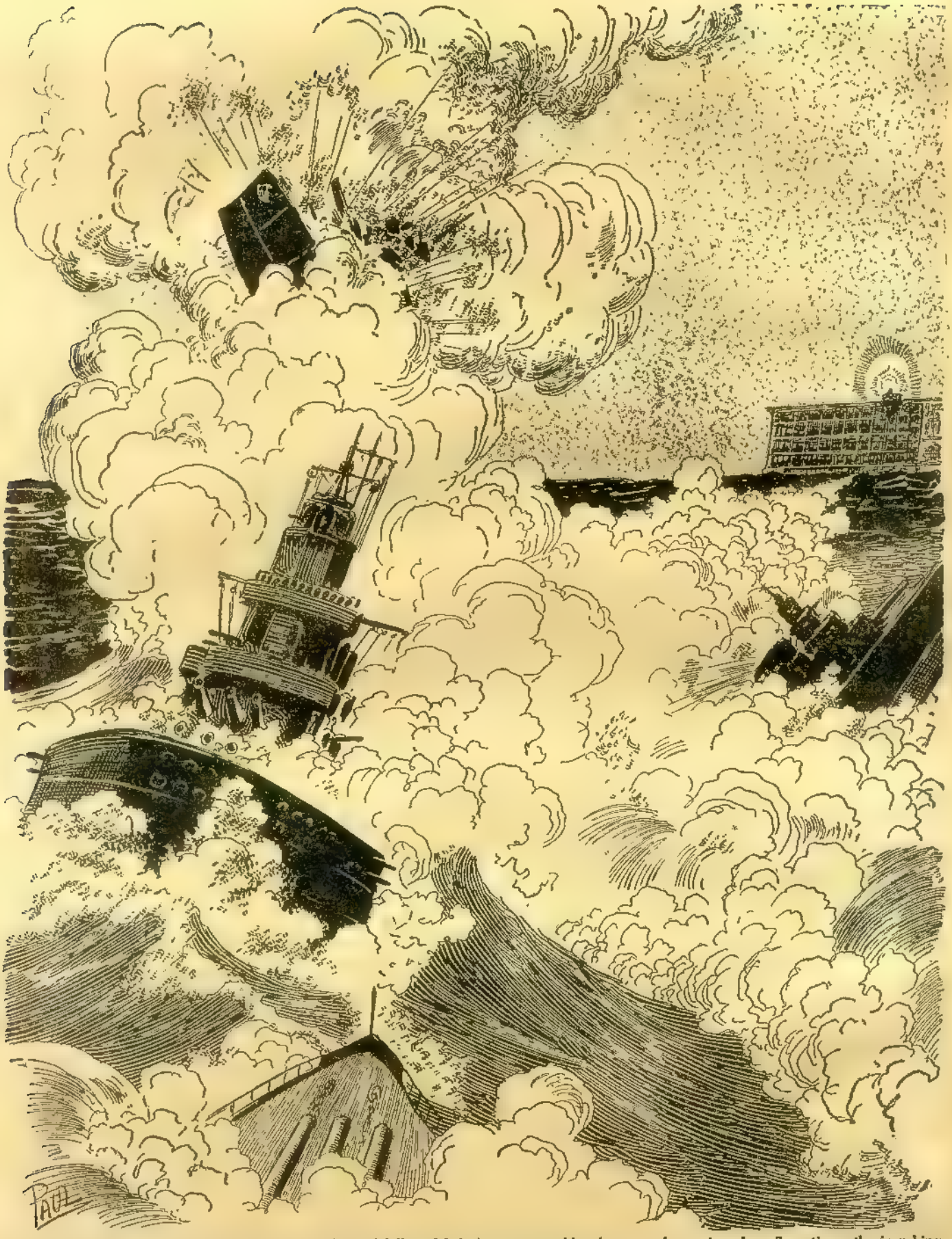
"Yes, the old scar I gave him the first time, was hidden by the beard. I recognized him when I saw him in Budapest and later looked up his record in Paris. He was first known to you by the name of Von Polits. His name was Ravnowickz Von Polits. His father was Austrian and his mother, Hungarian. He took an important part in the red revolution of Bela Kun under his mother's name, and afterwards escaped into Austria. In later years, however, he had been mostly in Hungary. He had been mixed in every political upheaval of both countries for many years either as a Bolshevist or a revolutionary."

"I was sure I had seen him before," she replied.

"Seen him before? I don't understand," said Holden, who had just begun to think clearly over the perplexing problems that had been so suddenly thrust upon his mind. "And you knew Jerry before?"

"Yes, Jerry and I are old friends, but you must not excite yourself now. The story can wait. Besides, we cannot delay any longer our preparations for the next division." Kitty Cromwell then went over the apparatus with Scott, showing him its essential working features. Then Holden discussed with him some of the more intricate points, showing him which meters and gauges were to be watched, and how the currents through the rheostats were synchronized. While not technically versed in mechanical and electrical theory, Jerry Scott soon mastered the essential working details. At times, as Holden lay on the couch giving directions, he would close his eyes and bite his lips as the twinges of pain shot through him. Kitty Cromwell was most anxious concerning the result of the shock on his heart, and was constant in her attentions and watchfulness over him.

Before their preparations were fairly concluded, Holden, whose couch was placed close to the table which held the microphone detector, announced the approach of the second division of airplanes. Scott mounted the pedestal and in an instant Kitty Cromwell was beside him. They had not long to wait. On came the approaching division in their wedge shaped formation. As she had already witnessed the destruction of two squadrons, Scott now depended on her judgment as to the distance at which they were to begin their work of destruction. On they came, now ten, then eight miles away; she gave him the signal



It was not the roll of explosions nor yet the crashing of falling debris; it was more like the roar of a series of conflagrations, the inrushing of infinite matter to fill the void where matter had been dissolved. There was a hissing of the waters with clouds upon clouds of steam, where a moment before, had been ten miles of ships, the pride of Europe's mighty navies. Only the troubled waters now marked the place where they had so proudly floated.

and he sighted the tube, then threw in the gears of the moving device and pressed and locked down the pedal.

Jerry Scott marvelled at the silent destruction that followed; a rapid succession of flashes,—a few wisps of smoke floating away on the breeze,—just an instant of time, then nothingness. Some of the planes seeing their comrades being annihilated, tried to dive and cross below the others, but they only dove into the silent death. It was inescapable and there was no time to send out a message of what was happening. Just a change of state of matter from solid to gaseous form; a sudden release of energies pent up in the atom since the beginning of time; a flash as some of the atoms reunited with the oxygen in the air. Death to those who guided the planes, was painless, simply an instantaneous physical dissolution. One moment they were, the next they were not. There was no struggling, no wracking of the body with pain, no clogging at the throat as with poisonous gases. No aftermath of maimed bodies and sightless eyes, or years of hopeless suffering. Just the final ultimate moment of time moved up to the present. It was war, but war stripped of its terrors and, best of all, it was war that would make war henceforth forever impossible.

The annihilations of the third, fourth and fifth divisions that afternoon was as complete as had been those of the morning. Following the fifth division, came a long period of waiting. They had timed the appearances of the other divisions and found a two-hour interval between them so, after two and a half hours had passed with no indication of approaching planes on the microphone, it was decided that there was no longer any reason for remaining at their station. The allies would time their flight so as to arrive at the isleport during the daylight hours, in order to avoid confusion and accidents. The sun was now not over an hour above the western horizon so, at Holden's direction, Jerry Scott opened the power switches and closed the leaves of the dome in order to protect the apparatus from the corrosive effects of the salt air.

DURING the latter hours of the day, Holden's wound had been giving him more trouble and Kitty Cromwell wished to give it a more thorough examination and treatment than had been possible when she had first dressed it. The hotel was equipped, like an ocean liner, with an operating room which fortunately was located on the upper floor, this being on the same level as that of the apartment and laboratories. From this room, Scott procured an operating table to which they transferred the wounded man and wheeled him into the operating room. Holden objected at first, to being treated as a casualty, maintaining that his wound was merely a flesh wound and that he was perfectly able to walk, but his nurse demanded implicit obedience, in which demand she was ably seconded by Jerry Scott. In the well-lighted operating room, Kitty Cromwell went about her work with that quiet efficiency and assurance that had been acquired on the fighting front when doctors were scarce. She found an able assistant in Jerry, who had likewise had a valuable training in the care of the wounded both during wartime and in the jungle. The operating room was equipped with an X-ray tube with the use of which she had a reasonable degree of familiarity. Holden directed them in the matter of the current controls in order to obtain the right quality of light for a fluoroscopic examination, for neither felt competent for the more technical process of taking a photograph, nor did the time permit. They were principally concerned with the detection of any splinters of bone from the shoulder-blade, and the examination revealed two such slivers which had been partly torn off by the bullet. These were removed after administering a local anaesthetic, inasmuch as they considered that Holden's heart might be affected by complete anaesthesia. Cauteries were then prepared and inserted into the wound both from the back and from the chest. These would be left in for a day or so to insure thorough disinfection of the wound. It was not necessarily a dangerous wound except as any wound may be dangerous. Holden's previous condition must be taken into account, and the day had been an arduous one. They bandaged the wound with antiseptic dressings and bound the arm in a fixed position in order to prevent irritation through movement. Holden was then placed in a reclining wheel chair and conveyed to his apartment.

Bob Holden was overjoyed at the timely appearance of his friend. There was much to talk over, but Scott realized the necessity for keeping his friend from too great excitement and therefore, did most of the talking himself. He led them through his travels and adventures in remote parts of the world, but he did not once allude to his former acquaintance with Kitty Cromwell. He told them more in detail of his chance meeting with Ravnowickz in Budapest and of the conversation he had overheard which led to his following the spy, but he did not mention again his recognition of the Austrian, nor any of the circumstances of their former meeting during the World War. This would have involved the story of Kitty Cromwell and it was hers to tell whenever she should wish to do so. His story of his combat with the spy on the golf course and of the subsequent escape of the latter from the room where he had been left bound, was received with enthusiasm.

"And all that," responded Kitty Cromwell, "was taking place while we sat here knowing nothing of it, not even of your presence on the isleport."

"Even Ravnowickz," he replied, "did not know of my presence here."

"How do you mean, he did not know of it?"

"He thought he was fighting Bob, and could not understand how such a great student should also be able to conquer him in personal combat. But there is something for you to explain, Kitty Cromwell. How about that shot you fired last night?"

"So you knew of that also. Has anything transpired here that you did not know about? Perhaps you also know about the code message he sent."

Scott repeated it almost verbatim, to their utter amazement. He then told them how he had obtained the message, and also of his midnight vigil on the previous night.

"I see," she said, "that there is no use trying to hide anything from you, so I will lay bare my villainous alliance and cast myself upon your mercy." Then she told of Dr. Von Sturm; of her interview with the spy and his demand for the wax impression of the key to Holden's laboratory. But when Jerry produced the block of wood containing the impression, from the pocket where he had deposited it on the day before, the room echoed and re-echoed with their laughter. When the merriment had subsided, she suddenly turned upon her would-be tormentor, with: "Now Jerry, honor bright, you thought Bob had a spy in his own camp, didn't you? That is why you were watching last night. You thought that Ravnowickz and myself would be holding midnight parley on how best to murder your friend and turn the isleport over to our European Allies."

It was Jerry's turn now to show signs of discomfort

and embarrassment, but he rightly divined that silence was better than any answer he could make to one who had so keenly analyzed his thoughts. He now wished to be alone for a time to think over the events of the day, so he excused himself on the plea that he would keep watch for a time in case the fleet should put in an appearance. Holden assured him that a duplicate microphone buzzer was connected in his room and would give them due warning of such an event. But Jerry insisted that now the war was on in earnest, they could not exercise too great caution. Moreover Holden was much worn by the exciting events of the day and needed rest.

In the Palm Garden, Jerry selected a spot with an unobstructed view toward the East and made himself comfortable in a steamer chair. The night was clear and bracing but not cold. The next day would undoubtedly witness operations on a larger scale and it seemed that if the allies should make a combined air and naval attack, nothing short of a miracle could save them. But he had that day witnessed a miracle in the destroying effect of the positive ray and he knew that he had yet to fathom the resources of the brilliant scientific mind of Bob Holden. Their safety lay in a great measure in the fact that the destruction wrought that day was unknown to the European Alliance. Would they expect some message from their forces on the isleport that night? They undoubtedly would. He thought of wheeling Holden out to the wireless room, then he considered that he would not know what Station Signal to call. Moreover there would be great risk of the allies detecting the ruse, inasmuch as the operator at the other end would undoubtedly recognize that Holden's sending was not that of Ravnowickz or of any other operator that would be delegated to the work. On the whole, it were better to let them suppose that there was a mishap to the wireless sending equipment. Let them suppose anything they wished, their imagination could hardly at the utmost, visualize the completeness of their disaster, especially after the message the spy had sent.

Finally his thoughts wandered out over the varied experiences of his wandering life. It had all been a glorious adventure, captivating to one of his temperament. There had been enough of the valleys to enhance the beauty of the sun-kissed peaks. He had peered into all sorts of environs and lived under all sorts of conditions, but he had lived for the sheer joy of living. His paths had crossed and recrossed with those of others, notably with those of Bob Holden and Kitty Cromwell, now to converge again upon this fabled Atlantis, the masterpiece of Holden's master mind. He had carried through the years the memories of this adorable Irish lass, and now had found her again after years of seeking. But he saw only too clearly how matters stood betwen her and his friend. He would not intrude his own feelings to leave any pangs of regret. They should never know how he felt toward her. Deep within himself, he felt the fitness of these two for each other, and he held some modest doubts of his own ability to bring to her happiness in such measure as he knew he would receive it. He was after all, only a vagabond. He had never concentrated on any work such as Bob Holden had done. His art was his greatest achievement, and in that he felt that he could have risen to far greater heights, had he been a more earnest and consistent worker. He would see this thing through, and if they came out of it unscathed, would take up his pack again and carry on. This settled, he wrapped his blanket about him and fell lightly to sleep, the sleep of his jungle days, when men and beasts threatened from every quarter; sleep that left the ears attuned to the sounds of the night. Yet he had learned thus, how to get the necessary rest and refreshment. He awoke with the first graying in the eastern sky, harbinger of the day of destiny about to dawn.

CHAPTER XII

The Battle of Atlantis

MORNING dawned on the second day of what was to be known in history as the Battle of Atlantis. Holden, although suffering intensely from his wound, insisted on accompanying his two friends to the circular room. While they were filled with anxiety for his welfare, there seemed to be no alternative. The failure of any part of the complicated apparatus to function properly, would undoubtedly cost them their lives as well as the loss of the cause for which they fought. Accordingly, they acceded to his demand and wheeled him into the observatory, where he directed Jerry Scott in the opening of the dome and the preparation of the apparatus.

The wind had veered during the night to eastward and was now blowing almost exactly from the direction from which the attacking forces would come. This was favorable to the trio of defense, as it placed the long side of the isleport with the circular room, broadside to the line of attack and made it less possible for any of the enemy to get around in the rear. The isleport, not having been designed with a view to its present militant purposes, had one vulnerable point. For, while an air attack from any quarter could be repelled providing the planes maintained a reasonable altitude, an attack from naval vessels from the side of the isleport opposite to the observatory, must have proved successful to the attacking forces. This was due to the fact that the deflection of the positive ray tube to an angle necessary to meet such an attack, would bring the opposite side of the structure itself into the path of the positive ray. Moreover, had the wind been from a westerly direction, such a condition would have undoubtedly proved disastrous, inasmuch as the structure would then have intervened between the positive ray tube and the approaching aerial armada. Holden had considered such a possibility and, had the contingency arisen, he had decided to lower the rear side of the isleport by letting air out of the bottles on that side until the decks slanted downward away from the circular room. If this provision did not sufficiently remove the landing deck from the path of the ray, this deck together with the upper stories of the hotel would be cut in twain. In any case he must take the hazard if the winds did not favor. He was relieved therefore to find that nature had contributed to the success of the cause he sponsored. In the matter of an attack from the rear, he depended upon the enemy's ignorance of the conditions. The complete annihilation of their air fleets on the previous day would prevent them from acquiring any knowledge of the means of destruction employed against them, and in order to keep them in ignorance of this weakness he would engage the attacking forces while they were yet at sufficient distance to prevent its discovery. The absence of any radio message from their compatriots supposed now to be occupying the isleport would, in all probability, cause them to exercise a greater degree of precaution in their approach on this, the second day of their mobilization.

Holden, from his wheel chair, interspersed his instructions to Jerry Scott, with periods of listening at the microphone in order to catch the first sound of approaching planes. Finally there came to him the faint sounds of distant propellors, and in another

twenty minutes they caught sight of the oncoming divisions. As they came into clearer view, it became apparent that they were coming in larger force than on the previous day, and the watchers were soon able to distinguish the outlines of three separate divisions through the binoculars. The center division was flanked on either side by a division flying some distance in the rear of the leading one. Each division was arranged as on the previous day, in wedge shaped formation. Whether the absence of communications from their comrades, had led to a suspicion that called for a concerted movement, could only be conjectured by those awaiting the attack. Certain it was, however, that this new front presented problems which the attack of the previous day had not previsioned. Scott and Miss Cromwell on the platform, swept sea and sky with the glasses and kept Holden informed of the tactics employed by their adversaries, receiving from him in turn directions for the conduct of the defense.

They must not let the enemy approach close enough to come within effective range for the use of their machine guns, yet it would be necessary to allow the leading division to approach near enough to insure that none of those in the rear could make their escape. As on the previous day, they were flying at an altitude of approximately three thousand feet. When they had reached a distance of about eight miles from the isleport, Holden directed Scott to aim the tube at the rear right hand division and lock in the moving device and pedal. He must however, be ready to throw it out of gear at any moment, as occasion might demand. In rapid succession there came the staccato of flash and puff of smoke and the visual blanking of the space where before a plane had been. In a little more than a minute the right hand division was swept away; but, during the interval that this stupendous work was in progress, consternation seized the other two divisions. The one on the left, right-faced hoping to elude this mysterious power, which in a moment of time had destroyed a division of fifty planes, but the leading division came straight on spreading out however, to avoid if possible the destruction wrought by what they must have supposed to be some new type of anti-aircraft gun.

Jerry Scott swung the tube to head off the flight of the left hand division, then as he stepped on the pedal, he slowly moved the tube back toward the line of planes now massed by their manuevre into what appeared from the side to be a compact group. As this line of planes rushed into the path of the ray slowly sweeping to meet them, the destruction was appalling. The division was dissolved almost in an instant. Only a denser cloud of smoke told where they had been. Back swung the tube to the leading division, now less than five miles distant. A rain of machine gun bullets fell into the water a half mile short of the isleport. Scott stopped the leader. Then they heard the sing and whine of bullets through the air above them. Quickly he whirled the tube from plane to plane, pressing the pedal with each movement, and picking off the foremost of the flyers. As the flashes followed each other in rapid succession, confusion seized those that were left; some sought refuge in higher altitudes, while others dived low or wheeled about to flee from the wrath of that invisible power. In the confusion that resulted, all sense of order was lost. It became a race of every man from the silent death that awaited him. Plane crashed into plane, followed by bursts of flame and the shooting of seething tongues of fire into the waters beneath. But Scott did not pause in his work of destruction. With the precision of a pendulum, he swung the tube from group to group and plane to plane, for none must escape to carry back the news.

DURING the engagement, Kitty Cromwell stood beside him and kept up a rapid fire of reports to the impatient Holden in his chair below. The cold chilled them to the marrow, the frost gathered on hair and clothing and coated the metal parts of the structure and apparatus, save those parts which were warmed by the reaction taking place in the tube. With the first whistling of the bullets, Scott had motioned her to go below, but she did not heed him and kept up her stream of reports to the wounded man who could scarcely be restrained from mounting the platform beside them.

"A flash," she said, "one gone, two, three, five; they go so fast I cannot count them. Consternation has seized them, they wheel and retreat, a whole division has turned back. But we are following them. The division is wiped out." Then as the bullets whistled around them "the leader is down. Two more are gone, some rise, others dive. Two crash and fall in flames, now two more. They criss-cross. Some wheel to go back. Then flash, flash, flash, little puffs of smoke are all that remain of them. Now only a few scattered planes flying back. A flash, a puff, then another and another. All is over. Three divisions are wiped out." Then turning to Jerry Scott, she extended her hand with, "Bravo, Jerry." But as she turned, something over the horizon caught her eye and she picked up the binoculars. Not a sound came from her companions as she focussed them, then she said: "Little wisps of smoke over the horizon, drifting toward us on the wind. I think it is the battleships that are coming."

Scott looked and confirmed her opinion. They were probably between twenty-five and thirty miles away. "Tell me Bob," said Jerry, "what will be the effect of this ray on a battleship?"

"One can never tell," said Holden, "until a thing is tested and naturally, I have never made such a test. I have turned steel, wood, coal, even a diamond into gas, instantaneously. But that was at a short distance. Probably at a distance say of a hundred yards, the ray would cut a ship in twain. But at a distance of a few miles, it should disintegrate the structure of a battleship as readily as that of an airplane. However, we shall soon see."

The band of smoke drifting across the horizon had broadened out now and seemed to be coming from three separate lines of ships. In half an hour their masts and stacks could be plainly seen through the binoculars. There was apparently a central line of battleships flanked on either side by a line of destroyers and light cruisers. Suddenly the entire fleet began to belch forth black smoke from their stacks which, drifting down the wind in front of them, quickly blotted them from view.

"Do you think they could have seen the destruction of the air fleets," queried Scott, "or could one of the planes have sent a message?"

"There was hardly time to send any message," replied Holden, "but they may have seen some of the flashes in the air and are scenting danger. However, they will not know whether some of their planes have made a landing or not. They could easily reach us now with their long range guns, but not knowing the fate of their aircraft, they will hardly risk firing until a closer view discloses the real situation. The possession of this isleport as a base, is absolutely necessary to the carrying out of their plans, and they will not willingly take any steps that would result in its destruction: It will moreover, undoubtedly seem incredible to them, that all their planes have been destroyed,

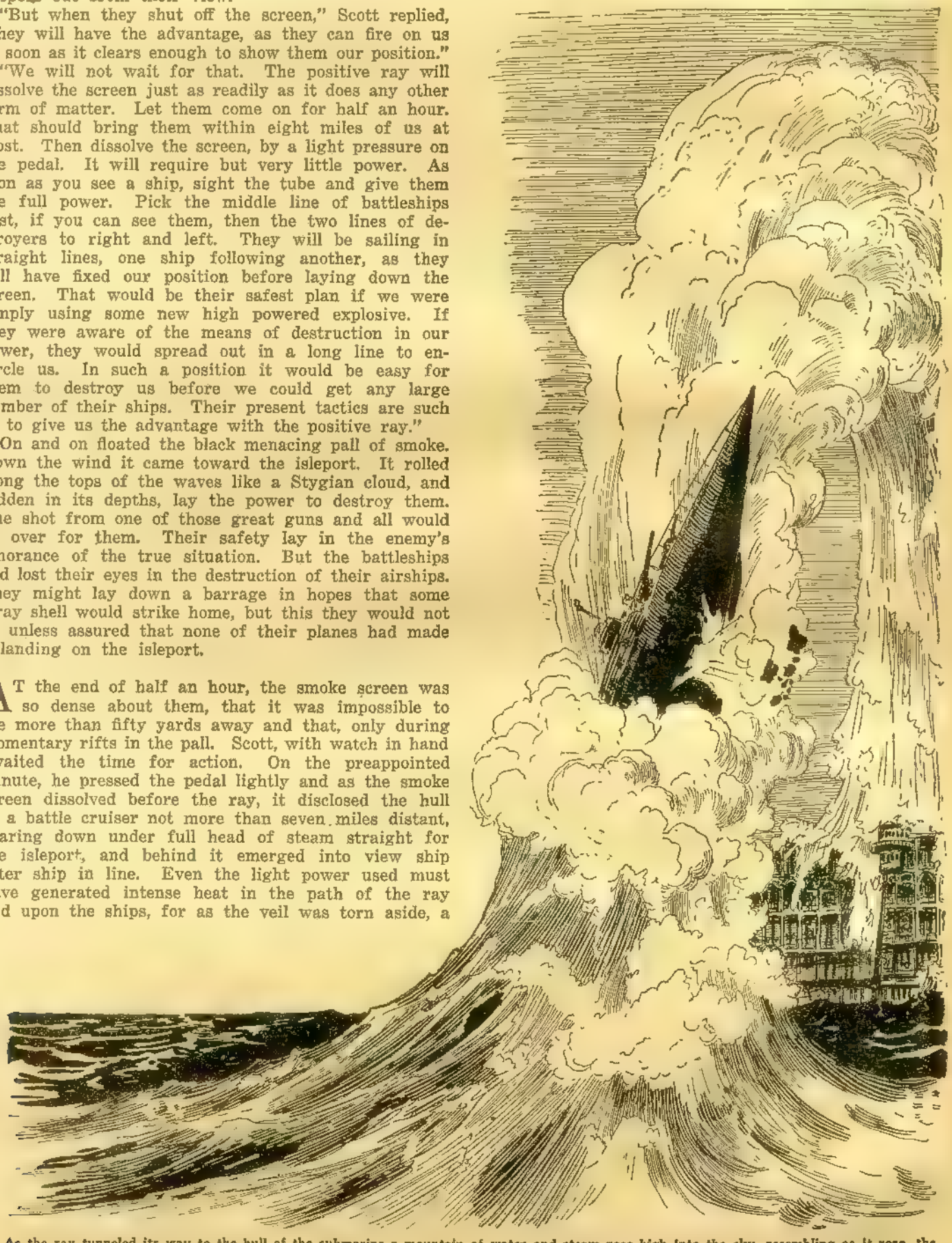
and the fact that none have returned will be taken as a clear indication that the isleport is in their possession. The smoke screen will work to our advantage as well as theirs for it will soon shut the isleport out from their view."

"But when they shut off the screen," Scott replied, "they will have the advantage, as they can fire on us as soon as it clears enough to show them our position."

"We will not wait for that. The positive ray will dissolve the screen just as readily as it does any other form of matter. Let them come on for half an hour. That should bring them within eight miles of us at most. Then dissolve the screen, by a light pressure on the pedal. It will require but very little power. As soon as you see a ship, sight the tube and give them the full power. Pick the middle line of battleships first, if you can see them, then the two lines of destroyers to right and left. They will be sailing in straight lines, one ship following another, as they will have fixed our position before laying down the screen. That would be their safest plan if we were simply using some new high powered explosive. If they were aware of the means of destruction in our power, they would spread out in a long line to encircle us. In such a position it would be easy for them to destroy us before we could get any large number of their ships. Their present tactics are such as to give us the advantage with the positive ray."

On and on floated the black menacing pall of smoke. Down the wind it came toward the isleport. It rolled along the tops of the waves like a Stygian cloud, and hidden in its depths, lay the power to destroy them. One shot from one of those great guns and all would be over for them. Their safety lay in the enemy's ignorance of the true situation. But the battleships had lost their eyes in the destruction of their airships. They might lay down a barrage in hopes that some stray shell would strike home, but this they would not do unless assured that none of their planes had made a landing on the isleport.

AT the end of half an hour, the smoke screen was so dense about them, that it was impossible to see more than fifty yards away and that, only during momentary rifts in the pall. Scott, with watch in hand awaited the time for action. On the preappointed minute, he pressed the pedal lightly and as the smoke screen dissolved before the ray, it disclosed the hull of a battle cruiser not more than seven miles distant, bearing down under full head of steam straight for the isleport, and behind it emerged into view ship after ship in line. Even the light power used must have generated intense heat in the path of the ray and upon the ships, for as the veil was torn aside, a shell screamed through the air above them and burst in the water half a mile beyond them. There was not an instant to spare and as Scott readjusted the



As the ray tunneled its way to the hull of the submarine a mountain of water and steam rose high into the sky, resembling as it rose, the writhing, twisting body of a waterspout . . . Down where the waters had been voided when the ray tore its gulf in the side of Neptune, the sea rushed back with the force of a tidal wave that shook the isleport. Then came the downpour like a cloudburst.

sighting of the tube, Holden, who could no longer restrain himself, was on the platform beside them throwing his full weight upon the pedal. But rapid as had been their action, the pedal had scarcely started on its descent, when another shell struck to the right of the isleport and a little short of it. But its bursting was almost unnoticed for simultaneous with it came a long drawn out roll as of the reverberations of distant thunder. It was not the roll of explosions nor yet the crashing of falling debris, but more like the roar of a series of conflagrations, the inrushing of infinite matter to fill the void where matter had been dissolved. There was a seething and hissing of the waters with clouds upon clouds of steam where, a moment before, had been ten miles of ships, the pride of Europe's mighty navies. Only the troubled waters now marked the place where they had so proudly floated, the exalted symbols of the power and majesty of their nations.

Another instant and the two lines of destroyers were dissolved into space. Just a long flash that receded as it sped down the line like a devouring flame, a seething of the waters and the long low rumble as of distant thunder. Two or three shells had screamed harmlessly over their heads, fired by the destroyers in the interval of time that had elapsed in sighting the tube, but there had been no time for the gunners to find their range and the shells went wide of their mark.

It was Kitty Cromwell who sighted the periscope rising from the water less than half a mile to their left. She waited to speak no word, but quickly whirled the tube, deflecting it as she did so, and stepped on the pedal. Neither of the trio were prepared for the stupendous character of the results that followed. A seething cauldron of superheated steam burst with volcanic force, from the path of the ray where it met the surface of the ocean. As it tunneled its way to the hull of the submarine, a mountain of water and steam rose high into the sky, resembling as it rose the writhing, twisting body of a waterspout. Clouds of steam spread out over the heavens and a wave of scorching heat swept back upon them. Down where the waters had been voided when the ray tore its gulf in the side of Neptune, the sea rushed back with the force of a tidal wave that rocked the isleport. Then came the downpour like a cloudburst. Tons of water poured over the decks and into the circular room and the structure shook and trembled under the impact. Then suddenly the sun burst through the clouds of steam and mist and the isleport was enclosed in a circle of rainbows.

They stood drenched to the skin, gazing at the effects of the stupendous phenomenon they had witnessed. Far in the distance a few scattered cruisers or destroyers which had left their line when the first line of ships were destroyed, were fleeing under full speed from the mysterious destruction.

As they turned to look at each other, overawed by the incredible cataclysm of the morning and rejoicing in their signal victory over the God of War, neither one spoke but their hearts were filled with paeans of thanksgiving for their safe deliverance and the deliverance vouchsafed to millions of others throughout the world. But as they looked into each other's eyes brimming with tears, they saw Holden's body relax and sink limply to the platform. Jerry Scott was just in time to catch him. Gently he carried his pal down the steps and placing him in the chair, rolled him back to his apartment where they placed him in his bed. Exhaustion, excitement, the heat and the drenching he had received, had brought on the collapse they had feared, and fever followed quickly in its train.

CHAPTER XIII

Tidings

AMERICA heard the news of the battle through London where it had been received from the Azores. Out of the great Armada consisting of fourteen battle cruisers, twenty-six battleships, fifteen airplane mother ships, thirty-seven cruisers and forty-six destroyers, only seven destroyers and three cruisers had returned to Fayal and more than four hundred airplanes had been destroyed. The submarines and the remaining divisions of airplanes had been turned back by the fleeing destroyers. Only one super-sub had taken part in the attack and it was never heard of again.

The nature of the forces which had wrought such wholesale destruction, was wrapped in mystery. Investigation soon revealed the fact that Bob Holden had gone to Isleport Number Two on the day preceding the announcement of the purposes of the European Alliance, and that he had not returned when the isleport was evacuated. Holden was well known in Government circles where he was looked upon as the outstanding scientific genius of the world. The stupendous results could be accredited to no other agency and he was heralded by the press as the wizard who had written "Finis" to the world's book of wars. Meantime no word had come from the isleport and doubts were beginning to be entertained for his safety. Radio calls were being sent out for the isleport at hourly intervals, but no reply had come. Of course it was possible that the sending apparatus on the isleport had been damaged during the battle, but even in such a case, a man of Holden's resources would undoubtedly find a means for repairing any damages short of a complete wreck of the apparatus. The Government of the United States, which a few days before had been making frenzied efforts to meet the impending catastrophe, now responded to the universal demand and dispatched airplanes and a fleet of fast cruisers to bring home the man who had rendered such signal service to his native land.

The Senate, which for days had listened in its usual majestic state of innocuous desuetude, to the caustic denunciations of the minority party over the failure of the two houses to agree upon measures for adequate aerial defense, now gathered together its scattered wits and voted Holden a Distinguished Service Medal.

Barricades, which had been hastily erected to protect the tops of the skyscrapers in lower Manhattan, were removed, and the Stock Exchange resumed its business, this time with abnormal operations. Marine stocks soared to new high points and Trans-Atlantic Airplane Service, Inc., notwithstanding the losses it had sustained in the sinking of its isleports, jumped more than fifty points in a single day.

In thousands of homes throughout the land, Gold Star Mothers and the mothers of a younger generation offered thanksgiving for the thing that had come to pass and for him who had brought it to pass, for the press throughout the land acknowledged with one voice, that the horrors of war were over forever, and that henceforth the history of nations must be written in terms of peace and constructive progress rather than in those of war and destruction.

The European Alliance lost no time in treating for peace. They recognized the futility of making war against such unknown and all-powerful forces. The wildest rumors were afloat concerning the nature of the silent death that had dissolved their mighty Armada. None of the survivors had been near enough to the front to give any adequate description of what had happened. They had witnessed their first line battle-

ships destroyed in an instant of time leaving no wreckage to tell the tale. They had felt the scorching heat and had turned out of their own line to get away from the holocaust. There had been no sound of shot or shell, just a series of flashes that swept down the line of ships with the roar of a conflagration; the waters had boiled and sent out clouds of steam. Some had seen a violet tinted light that played for an instant along the line of ships, then vanished. Whatever the power might be, it was invincible. Nothing could withstand it. The United States could operate such an engine of destruction from every warship. It was even rumored that such preparations had been made. One thing was certain, guns and explosives of all sizes and description, were forever obsolete so far as their use in war was concerned. Navies could be cast into the junk-heap and airplanes must look for their future development to the enterprises of peaceful industries. One man armed with such a power could defy and had defied the world. It was an accepted conclusion that when The Conference of London should gather to arrange the terms of peace, a protocol, calling for universal disarmament, would be required by The United States as a preliminary to further overtures.

It was the third day after the battle and America still awaited some word from Atlantis. Airplanes had been dispatched the night before and the press of America waited with bated breath for the first news from the isle of destiny. The great newspaper press-rooms of New York and the Atlantic seaboard had the story of Bob Holden's life all set. Atlantis was treated with a wealth of detail. Pictures of the Isleport and particularly of the mysterious circular room with its semi-spherical dome had been obtained and used to decorate the front pages of the "Extras" which now awaited only the message momentarily expected. The fastest operators were ready at the linotype machines and the editorial offices and wireless rooms waited with bated breath for the expected call. All wireless service had been suspended, and the nation held itself in the tense silence of expectancy.

Then came the call agreed upon. It was "World Peace." The operators galvanized into action. Typewriters hummed as they transcribed the dots and dashes which came over the ether. Page after page fell from the hands of the operators into the hands of alert messengers who rushed them madly to the linotype rooms. Twenty minutes from the time the message was ended, the first "Extras" were cried by the newsboys on the streets.

"HOLDEN ALIVE BUT WOUNDED," ran the heading. Newsboys were showered with bills that demanded no change, in return for the coveted copies. People gathered in crowds on the streets and talked excitedly to others whom they knew not. Social barriers and the prestige of position were all swept aside in the common concern for the welfare of the man who had saved them from the horrors of war. Men mounted boxes and read aloud to surrounding groups from the coveted sheets, which the presses could not reel off fast enough to meet the demand. Here and there stood a group with bared heads as one offered prayer. Elsewhere tears mingled with cheers as, business forgotten, the banker and the pauper wheeled into the lines of spontaneous parades and marched up Fifth Avenue or Broadway from the financial district to the upper business sections. It was a nation's hour of thanksgiving.

In a street in the West Eighties, one, Dr. Von Sturm, made a hurried departure in response to a call. But he never returned to his practice. Secret Service agents, who later sought to trace him, could find no clue to his whereabouts.

At the Harvard Club, Holden's former friends and classmates recounted incidents in the life of their now illustrious comrade. One who had been present on that night many years ago, told the story of Jerry Scott, and of the toast that they drank then, "To The Abolition Of War." Jerry was now with Bob Holden and this was the sequel to that night. A reporter was present and the following day the story was featured in his newspaper, but no one knew of the identity of the nurse, Kitty Cromwell.

The nation now settled down to await the outcome of Holden's illness. Extravagant preparations were made for his home-coming, a force of surgeons and nurses were sent to the isleport, but the days drifted into weeks as the forces on Atlantis battled with the fever. There was a season of tumultuous rejoicing mingled with tears and prayers of thanksgiving, when the message finally came announcing that the crisis had passed. Then the nation again waited.

CHAPTER XIV

A Pledge Fulfilled

ATLANTIS was basking in the sunlight of a well earned rest. That Utopian peace which, centuries before, had inspired ancient thought with its chimerical visions, had become the harbinger of a universal concord among nations. To the trio marooned on this modern antitype of the ancient conceit, there had come the counterpart of that which they had given to the world. They lived under the shadow of Holden's illness but the shadow could not dim the halo of service for one who had given so much to them and to the world. Kitty Cromwell was incessant in her attentions by day and Jerry Scott spent the night hours beside the bed of his friend. But she was never far away and ever appeared at the slightest sound to soothe him back to untroubled sleep. Her power in quieting him did not pass unnoticed by Scott. Once from the background of the library, he noted the color that suffused her cheeks when Holden mumbled incoherent words from which he only caught distinctly her first name.

For days, Holden wandered in delirium, roaming mostly through the pleasant paths of the Palm Garden he loved. Anon he talked of his boyhood days on the New England farm, of its orchard and flowers, and of his mother, whose sainted image had left an undying impress upon his youthful mind. For to one who, throughout the normal walks of life, attunes his spirit to the natural and the beautiful, even the fancies of a delirious brain will seldom depart therefrom. There were times when his mind, slipping into the more recent pathways, drifted over troubled seas. At such moments there arose visions of war and the ogre of a black-bearded stranger rose as a menace before him; but even in such moments, there was the struggle to protect some one from harm, some one he loved. Then as the vision of the struggle merged into that of the greater conflict, he would say beneath his breath; "God help the poor devils, but it is war. I cannot do otherwise."

Shortly after breakfast on the third day after the battle, Jerry Scott was aroused from a reverie in the quiet of the Palm Garden, by the sound of approaching planes. He ascended to the landing deck to see five of these great birds approaching the isleport. Then one after another with graceful swoop skimmed over the deck, coming to a full stop near the far end. Walking toward them he was soon surrounded by a group of airmen. It required some minutes for him to convince them that he was not Holden, and that the man they sought lay wounded in his room below and could not

(*Continued on page* 286)

THE Nth MAN

By Homer Eon Flint

CHAPTER I

OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH

BEYOND a doubt, a child in a bathing suit appeals to the whole world. There is something universally enjoyable in the frisking, white legs, the dancing eyes and wild laughter. The surf loses its ominousness in the presence of such.

Florence Neil, aged nine, playing on the beach at Santa Cruz that summer's morning, offered convincing proof of the truth just stated. The child held the attention of everyone, successfully competing with the charms of certain older members of her own sex, whose bathing suits had been calculated to monopolize all sightseeing. Even the most sophisticated of the beach-lizards found greater enjoyment in the child's innocent abandon.

Already Florence gave promise of unusual beauty. She was a fairy-like creature, slender, small-jointed, and frail when in repose, although wonderfully animated in action. The tight, one-piece suit revealed the grace and freedom of every motion. Four years later, she was due to become stiff, angular and awkward, agonizingly self-conscious; now, she was utterly unaware that she offered a rare picture, a picture of radiant childhood, perfect, spirited, and unspoiled.

Cavorting there on the sand, her voice shrilling gleefully as she imagined herself being chased by the long, snaky bit of seaweed which she was trailing, she felt no inkling of what was passing through the minds of her beholders. The proud, watchful eye of her mother, seated under a wide umbrella a few yards away, made no impression upon the carefree mind of the child. None of the admiring glances from beach, boardwalk or pier, made her forget the supreme satisfaction she was getting from her lark. In short, for the time being, she was merely the unconscious medium of expression for a bundle of animal spirits.

Noon approached, and the beach began to fill. Presently, among the new arrivals, four attracted special attention among the beach-lizards already mentioned. The mother of the girl overheard this:

"See that little kid and the three women? That's Bert Fosburgh, and his three nursemaids!"

"Gee! Daly Fosburgh's kid?"

"Yeah. The only heir. It's a wonder the old robber doesn't hire a couple of cops to watch the maids!"

Florence Neil's mother dropped her sewing, to get a good view of the quartette. The three young women handled the boy as though in accordance with some prearranged drill. One removed his bath-robe, another adjusted his rubber cap and sandals, while the third, presumably the maid-in-chief, stood ready to lead him by the hand. Presently the lad stood ankle deep in the surf.

"He's eight or nine, now; isn't he?" Florence's mother heard. Then the reply: "Almost ten; he was born around Christmas, in 1911. Remember?"

Mrs. Neil remembered, too. When Daly Fosburgh's son had arrived safely in this world, the event had been made one of great rejoicing. The multi-millionaire had presented the state of California with a magnificent art museum, in honor of his only son.

For a while Florence paid no attention to the newcomer. Then, she gave him a glance or two, decided that her highly important affair with the seaweed could wait, and stopped long enough to give the lad a single, thorough inspection.

He stood decidedly taller than she, and looked proportionately heavier in all respects. Moreover, he was larger-boned and bigger-chested. Furthermore, he was blond, of the type which never tans but merely turns red after exposure to the sun. Florence's hair, eyes and complexion were all just a shade darker than average.

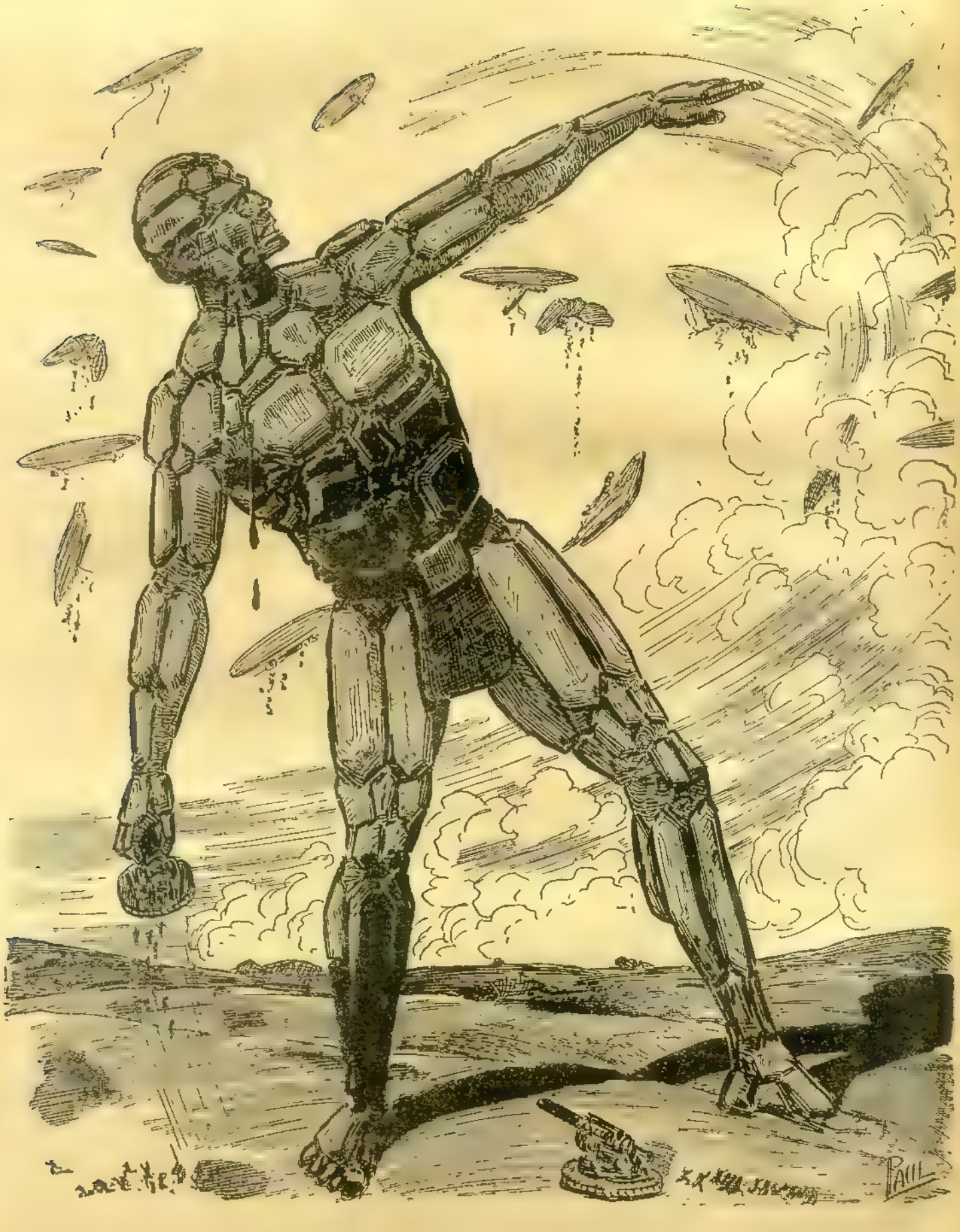
But the chief difference lay in the sedate, unbending manner and gait of the lad, as compared with Florence's liveliness. He looked as though every impulse to spontaneous, natural action had been stifled in him before it arose. For, despite his premature self-consciousness and gravity, there lurked more than a suggestion of latent fire and force in the unusually good muscular development of his whole body. The boy possessed a very fine gymnasium.

The question was, did he possess a will of his own? He clung obediently to the maid's hand as she led him, first east, then west, carefully along the rim of the beach. He took care to step in the minimum of water, so that the woman might not wet her dainty slippers. Twice he passed over the same stretch of sand, his eyes upon the tantalizing surf; a close observer would have noticed his free hand clenching and unclenching with repressed excitement.

FOR sheer daring and originality, it would be rather difficult to eclipse the present story.

What, after all, makes dwarfs, and what, giants? How small can a human being be, and how large? This theme has been speculated on before by scientists and by many fiction writers, but no one has had the courage to propose such a giant as the one we meet in this story. And it is all excellent science, and all not quite so impossible as it sounds at first. Everything in this world is relative. There have been tremendously large monsters on our earth, as is well attested by the fossils of ancient animals, the skeletons of which are in our museums.

Growth, after all, is a matter of surroundings, food and gland action. How far it may be stimulated, no one knows. At any rate, "The Nth Man" makes interesting reading. It's one of those stories that come along once in a generation. A story that will live forever.



Up he straightened. For an instant he gloated over the huge machine that now resembled a mere trinket in his grip, and then putting forth all his prodigious strength, the giant threw the gun into Oklahoma.

Otherwise, no sign. He continued to walk quietly along.

Then, he noticed the girl. She was staring straight at him, wondering. Instantly she quit wondering, whirled around and dashed into the surf, laughing mischievously. Out she splashed until the water reached her shoulders, where she turned about and laughed again. This time there was no mistaking her thoughts. She put them into words.

"What's the matter, 'fraid-cat? C'mon in! I dare you!"

The boy stared. This was a brand new experience. At the same time he seemed to feel, vaguely, that he had been dared before; far, far back in the history of that part of the human race from which he had descended, was an ancestor who had never balked at a dare. Not that any such philosophical thoughts passed through that mind; but his instinct told him that his manhood was being questioned; his character assailed; Somehow he knew it.

The maid's grasp tightened. Automatically the boy started on. The grasp loosened, and at the same instant the girl's mocking laughter pealed forth again. Like a flash the boy jerked his hand from the maid's, and before she could make a move, he had dashed into water up to his waist!

There he stood, gasping. Even in summer the surf is cold, before noon. He was bewildered, too, by a stifled scream behind him and a delighted squeal just ahead.

"C'mon! 'Fraid to come any further?"

"Bertram! Come here this instant! Do you hear?"

He heard; but he knew enough to realize the difference between the command of a hired care-taker and the challenge of an equal. The one could be passed over; the other, could not.

And thus Bert Fosburgh and Florence Neil became acquainted. The boy's private plunge had made him a good swimmer, and he was accustomed to artificially salted water. For all her activity, Florence was barely his equal in the game of tag which immediately started.

Neither of the three maids dared venture into the water, for fear of a wetting. One removed shoes and stockings, but she could not get near the frolicking pair; they simply went out into deeper water. Presently the life-guard's boat came near, attracted by the laughter; and the maids hailed it, imperiously:

"Make that boy get out of the water! He musn't play in there! Hurry!"

The guard's grin of enjoyment merely widened. "He c'n take care o' hisself, Lady! Don't need t' worry about him!"

"But—he musn't play there, I tell you! He might catch — something terrible, playing with — strange children!"

The guard took one look at the superbly healthy face of the girl. "No danger, lady! I'll keep an eye on 'em!"

The three maids held a consultation. Immediately one of them repaired to the bathhouse, from which, in the course of time, she emerged clad in a bathing suit. Bert's eyes clouded with the prospect of an end to his lark.

But the truth is that his teeth were chattering. So were Florence's. But the maid made the mistake of going into the surf, instead of simply commanding him to come out. He might have obeyed, cold as he was. Instead, she waded in.

So it was to be a chase! The boy warmed up. Also Florence became re-animated as she discomfitted the maid with well-aimed spurts of water, directed by sturdy palms. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, and the maid was unable to get nearer than three yards of her quarry. And the truth is that, of all the people on the beach, only the other two maids gave her the slightest sympathy.

In the end, it was sheer exhaustion that drove the boy to the sand. Immediately the reaction came; he was glad enough to creep, shivering, into the warm folds of his bath-robe. But his spirit still glowed as it had never glowed before.

"Good-bye!" shouted he to Florence. "I've had a jolly good time, little girl! Haven't you?"

"You bet! Coming down here again tomorrow?"

The boy looked up into the three stern, anxious faces above him. The maids would have to make a strict accounting to Daly Fosburgh. Bert shook his head.

"I think not." And then he was whisked away to the waiting limousine, at the same time that Florence's mother, by a crafty bit of maneuvering, captured and enrobed her daughter.

THAT was in the morning. Neither child had any expectation of ever seeing the other again. And yet, in the most natural manner in the world, Florence's mother and the three maids chose the same locality for spending the afternoon. There was nothing remarkable in the coincidence. Half the visitors at Santa Cruz follow the same procedure, putting in part of the day at the beach and part at Veau de L'eau.

This place is a portion of a famous Cliff Drive, where the sea has carved the cliffs into fantastic shapes and designs, where a small marine museum had been erected, and where lovers of the ocean invariably repair when at Santa Cruz. There is no beach; only the steady pounding of the sculpturing waters, and the wind.

The limousine arrived first. Keeping a firm grasp on the boy, the nurse-maids visited all the usual points of interest, carefully guarding against any sudden motion on the boy's part. In fact, one maid kept constantly between him and the cliff; she had not yet recovered from the shock of his unprecedented actions in the forenoon. The lad, without showing any signs of the spirit that still burned within him, enjoyed the scenery as much as might be expected under the circumstances.

Presently the street-car arrived, and Florence and her mother got off. They wandered along the cliff, following the path that everybody treads at Veau de L'eau. It was inevitable that, when it was time for the boy to return, he must encounter the girl and her mother.

This happened about five in the afternoon; an important detail, for it marked the moment of low tide. The water lay about thirty feet below the top of the cliff. In the light of what happened, this cannot be too strongly emphasized; the distance from water to land was five times the height of a tall man.

Being late in the day, there were few sight-seers about. Such visitors as were on hand were scattered up and down the cliff, paying scant attention to each other. From time to time each gazed out over the ocean, without seeing any other craft than a distant coasting steamer. Earlier in the day, fishing boats would have been numerous. Now, scarcely unruffled by the breeze, the water was tenanted only by seaweed and the natural denizens of the deep.

"I'm tired," announced Bert, about five o'clock. "Let's go back."

His word, in such matters, was law. Back the four proceeded, and in less than a minute, encountered Florence.

"Hello!" she shrilled, delighted.

"How do you do?" he inquired, sedately. But the light began to flash in his eyes again. One of the maids saw, and took hold of his other hand. He was a prisoner.

"What makes them so careful of you?" the girl wanted to know. Her mother, on seeing Bert, had deliberately turned her back and walked away, her brow clouded. And Florence went on, relentlessly; "Are you an inva-lid?"

The boy shook his head, mutely. The maid-in-chief answered for him. And as she spoke, she took in every detail of the girl's simple, inexpensive gown, the unpretentious hat and sturdy shoes, the very evident lack of means in her whole appearance.

"He is no invalid, little girl. But his health must be very carefully guarded. Especially," with great emphasis, "he must not associate with children below his station in life!"

This was over Florence's head. Her only idea of a station was a railroad depot. She replied:

"Mamma says I musn't play with every old Tom, Dick and Harry, whatever that means; but I don't see anything wrong in playing with this boy!"

"Don't you?" There is no snobbery like that of the snobbish maid to snobbish people. "Well, I think differently! Keep away from him, please! Do not come near!"

The girl stood back, astounded, hurt, mystified. She turned an incredulous gaze into the boy's troubled eyes.

"Don't you like me?" in an injured tone.

"Oh, but I do!" he flashed back, warmly. "I'm not angry with you, little girl. I'm just"—

The rest of his words were blown away by the wind, a wind created by the peremptory jerking of his two captors. No one seemed to notice Mrs. Neil, striding along ahead of them, her head down, and her cheeks streaked with tears. Her little girl! Was the child, like herself, always to face unhappiness because of the lack of money? Or—what amounted to the same thing—was Florence to suffer like that at the hands of those who had money? It was not right!

And thus it happened that the girl was left alone for a minute or two. She knew enough to keep away from the extreme edge of the cliff. She ventured to within what seemed a safe distance, and stared, still much hurt by what had happened, down into the idly moving waters.

Presently the boy looked back. Next instant he all but jerked loose from his captors. And he uttered a shrill scream.

The cliff was crumbling beneath the girl. As Bert screamed, Florence leaped to one side; but she landed on another crumbling portion. And before the eyes of those who were watching, the earth gave way and slid, with a rumble, into the sea. The girl vanished from sight.

Next moment the two women who were holding the boy found that they had their hands full. He screamed and struggled, so that the third maid had to help to hold him. It was Florence's mother who, hearing the scream, ran up and peered ove the edge.

Florence was on the surface, sputtering dazedly, but paddling much less franticallly than one would suppose. Mrs. Neil shouted, trying hard to keep her voice brave:

"Can't you g t out?"

Florence heard. She shook her head, and pointed mutely to the base of the cliff. It was far too precipitous to afford a hand-grasp, much less a foot-hold.

The mother threw a swift glance around. There was no boat nearer than miles. She had a fleeting fancy about airplanes and submarines; but there was no periscope in sight, and nothing but seagulls in the air. She shouted again:

"Keep away from the rocks! Hold your head up, and keep your hands and feet going! I'll get help!"

Florence understood. She nodded, coolly, and proceeded to save her strength as far as possible, by putting forth only enough exertion to keep afloat. Her nerve was unshaken.

Mrs. Neil ran, as fast as her skirts would let her, past the boy and his maids, and towards the buildings. No outsiders seemed to have seen the disaster. And, even while clinging to the wildly thrashing boy, the three maids could see that the case was hopeless.

The child could not possibly live in that sea until her mother brought help. Even though she escaped being dashed against the rocks she must surely become exhausted and give up, long before she could be rescued. The buildings were too far away. Even the boy seemed to realize it, for, all of a sudden, he stopped his struggling and collapsed in a heap, at the same time bursting into a fit of uncontrollable weeping. The women bent over him.

When they looked up, for a moment neither could believe her eyes. Each looked at the other, stupidly, then gazed down at the boy as though to learn whether he, too, could see what they were seeing.

Then they turned their eyes towards the edge of the cliff again. At the same instant, the boy also looked up. It was he who first found tongue.

"Why—why—where did— Why, what does it mean!"

And then all four fell silent. There on the edge of the cliff, exhausted, dripping, without the remotest idea of how she got there; thirty feet above the water where she had been drowning only a moment before; above the highest point that any wave had ever been known to reach, lay Florence Neil, safe and sound.

CHAPTER II

A CHAIN OF WONDERS

THE miraculous rescue of Florence Neil took place in July, 1920. And since then the world has been treated to a series of phenomena, each just as baffling, just as inexplicable. Moreover, as they are examined in their chronological order, these events are found to be progressively more bewildering, progressively more vast, until the final mystery leaves the mind fairly stunned with the terrific marvel of it all.

Taken one by one, these miracles offer no solution that is acceptable to the human intellect. It is only when they are grouped together, as the writer is now grouping them, that they become understandable. Only by scouring the globe to get the facts—for these mysteries were world-wide in their distribution—and by examining certain occurrences of the past thirteen years, can the mind appreciate the stupendous Thing that rescued Florence Neil, and that performed the other wonders about to be related.

Yet, once the list is read and all the facts in each case become known, the explanation becomes almost ludicrously simple. What had seemed miraculous, becomes natural, ordinary, understandable. One is no longer dubious as to whether the Nth Man was a creature or a thing.

The mind comes to see, after finishing the investigation, that humans readily become accustomed to that which is really astounding. The familiar example of the telephone will serve; today, we accept the wireless as commonplace. We forget that it was once considered impossible.

Just so do we now accept the Nth Man. We take him as a matter of course.

* * *

THE captain of the *Cristobel* raised himself, shakily, to his elbow. His voice quavered pitifully in his eagerness.

"Well? Quick, man—did you find it?"

The mate shook his head. "Brought up nothing but shells," with a gruffness which he probably assumed in order to conceal any pity for the sick man. "Shall I try again?"

"No." Captain Butler dropped back among his pillows. "Not tonight." His voice was infinitely weary.

The mate lingered. "There's something else, sir.

When the boys saw that the drag was a failure, they—well, sir, I only hope it doesn't mean mutiny!"

"Mutiny." The word did not seem to surprise the captain of the little sloop. "Can't say—that I blame them."

He thought deeply for a moment or so, then asked for a finger of rye. He drank it, and in a minute felt strong enough to talk. He knew that the liquor would cost him dear, a little later, but he could only hope that the investment would pay.

"Payson—you understand what this expedition means. Don't you think"—earnestly—"that you could make the boys comprehend? I hate to let this thing go on, rankling in their minds, until they are driven to extreme measures. I—can stand it to wait. But they can't. How about it? Couldn't you make them see it the way you do?"

Again the mate shook his head. "I've done too much talking already, sir. The've got so they won't pay any attention to me unless I threaten punishment. They—I've spoiled them, sir, by arguing with them."

"No, you haven't." Anyone could see that these two were not born-and-bred sea-faring men, but gentlemen forced out of milder walks of life into one for which they were never intended. "No, Payson. I wouldn't have it any different."

He took a second drink of the liquor. "Help me into my chair," he requested, rather than ordered. "I'm going to take a chance with them!"

The mate complied in silence. Within a minute the sick man was facing his crew, a motley dozen, picked up at Colon two months previous. The mate had rounded up everybody, including the cook.

"Men," began the captain, without delay, "you can guess why I've come out here. I'm taking a big chance, with my hip in such bad shape; but I've tried to put myself in your place, and I know that I'd want the facts straight from the boss.

"This treasure that we're after—it's just as the mate has told you. It was lost about three centuries ago, from a Spanish pirate, the *Cristobel*. This sloop was named after her.

"But our work is not at all piratical. We are here to recover that treasure, which is in the shape of a single immense 'nugget'—or rather, a chunk of quartz, shot through and through with virgin gold. Its history is uncertain, but it probably originated in Australia. As for the wreck, the data as to its location was handed down from generation to generation until, finally, it came into the possession of a man with money enough to get results.

"That man is—myself. As for this sloop, and its equipment, it represents all that I have in the world. If this expedition fails, I am a ruined man, and must go back to my wife and children to start life all over again.

"But, if success comes, I, and you just as truly, will be more or less wealthy. I don't know exactly how much 'the treasure' amounts to, but the account indicates that the gold will yield over a hundred thousand, at least.

"It lies here, exactly where we are searching; of that, I am dead sure. Between Antofagasta and Caldera, on the ten-fathom line. And we have already dragged half the distance!

"Just stay by me, boys, and you'll not regret it!"

The whiskey had had its effect. There was a manly ring in the sick man's voice that carried conviction to more than half his hearers. A slight murmur of approval arose, quickly checked as a wiry, furtive-eyed Portugese edged forward and spoke:

"We know, señor capitan. The mate, she tell us. Every day she tell. That all; she jus' tell. No find notting!"

It was a supreme effort. His vocabulary was limited. He slid back hurriedly behind his fellows, as though afraid he would be overwhelmed by the applause. It did not come.

"Does anybody else think the same way Manuel does?"

"Yis!" A powerful Irishman, the only man of his race aboard the craft, strode forward. He threw a scornful glance at the group which had murmured approval of the captain. "Oi t'ink it's a dom shame, sor! Ye've kept us here, goin' on two months, wit' no gold to show fer it, at all!

"'Tis toime we pulled up an' cleared out, sor!"

"Have you any personal reason for this opinion, Mike?"

"Yis!" The Celt was not to be daunted by the strange words the captain had used. "Them noospapers we got from th' Dago tramp steamer, said they was offerin' tin bucks a day for longshoremen at Noo York! That's better'n we be doin' here!"

To this, there was a rumble of agreement from the other half of the crew. And of those who had been friendly before, more than one began to look doubtful.

"Boys—there's more to this than you think." Captain Butler had made up his mind to a bold move. "I'm going to take you into my confidence.

"This money—assuming that we succeed—is going to accomplish something more than make us rich. It's going to do the world a great good. And I'm going to tell you, right now—even Payson doesn't know this—exactly what I intend to do with the bulk of my share.

"To begin with you've been calling me 'Captain Butler.' That is not my real name." He paused to let this take effect. "I merely adopted the name because it sounded more impressive than my real name, which is Jones, and because I have been, all my life, until a few months ago, employed as a butler, in the States.

"For almost twenty years I was a butler, men. I worked for half a dozen of the foremost families of the land. And during that time I learned to have an immense amount of sympathy for people of my own class.

"I found that the average servant is to be pitied, not despised, men. Most servants are forced by poverty to accept such work. Few actually prefer to wait hand and foot on someone else. It isn't natural.

"So I'm going to take my share and found a small home for servant's children. I am planning to care for about forty. The idea is to teach the poor kids some useful trade or other occupation, so that they will not be forced into waiting on other people.

"That's what I'm going to do with mine, boys! It's a big work, and something to be proud of when I'm an old man.

"As for what you do with yours, I don't care.

"That's your business. But at least we understand each other, now; and I think you'll stick by me, and match my patience with yours. How about it?"

Had there been any downright hard feelings among the men, or any spirit small enough to take advantage of a man in the captain's position, the affair might have turned out differently. But the captain had chosen his men, in the first place, with an unusual amount of shrewd psychological guidance. And he had taken first-rate care of them; he, of the whole ship, had been ill. From grub to phonograph, they had no cause for complaint.

THE crisis passed. Another month went by, with practically no change in the situation. The dragging brought no results at all; and day after day the sailors' patience slowly oozed away. The captain's condition, which ought to have become improved, remained the same as before. A little encouragement, and he would have recovered at once; disappointment kept him down.

The end came on the thirty-second day after the captain's burst of confidence. It came, as before, when the final haul of the day had proven barren. And the first

the captain knew of it, the big Irishman, with the entire crew at his back, was pushing his way past Payson into the cabin.

"Don't be scared, sor!" exclaimed Mike. "We mane no harm to ye; none at all, sor!

"We've just come to tell ye that we quit; no more! 'Tis no mutiny, sor; we're not that kind. Call it a strike. We jist refuse to stay here anither day, an' thot's an end to it!"

The captain looked steadily into their eyes. These men were, as he had judged before, of the right sort. He had nothing to fear from them, so long as he was reasonable. And he sighed as he admitted, to himself, that at least he must in justice give in.

"You are right, Mike. Go—back to your quarters. We sail—when the wind comes up, at midnight."

The men filed silently out. They knew that their stipulated thirty-a-month would be forthcoming when Panama was reached, and that they could ask nothing further. Payson followed them, and softly closed the door. No one knew what sprang to the captain's eyes the moment he was left alone.

That final evening off the coast of Chile, saw the crew in their hammocks at the usual hour. Five bells found the ship perfectly quiet, save for the soft lap of the Pacific against the hull, the gentle slapping of lines as the sloop swayed at anchor, and the constant, complaining squeak of wood against wood. Except for the men on watch, all were asleep.

Of those awake, one was the Irishman. The other's name, Nelson, is important because it typifies the kind of a character who was the chief witness to the second of the "Colossal Mysteries". Nelson, a stolid, unimaginative Swede, a total abstainer, whose veracity was proverbial aboard the ship, stood at the wheel. At the prow stood Mike.

By six bells, the breeze had become nearly strong enough to work with. Mike, however, had orders to wait until midnight; and now, with a return to civilization so near, he could afford to be patient. He fell to watching the sway of the vessel, speculating on the angle to which she leaned.

Suddenly, without any apparent cause, the ship careened far over towards the shore. Immediately, of course, she righted herself, or nearly righted herself; yet Mike fancied that she remained with a decided shoreward list. It was odd. Mike called, in a low tone, to the Swede:

"Did ye notice thot, Nels?"

"Did Ay notice watt."

"Th' ship: how she tilted, jist now!"

"Oh, yah; Ay notice him, oll right."

"What d'ye make of it, Nels?"

The Swede, as always when he did not know how to answer, made no reply at all. Silence once more settled over the sloop.

Now, it is at this point that we have to rely largely upon what Nelson told. Apparently Mike's thoughts, and eyes, were elsewhere at the moment. This is queer, because he afterwards declared that he had been eyeing the waist of the ship more or less, wondering what could have caused that cant.

But Nels Nelson was sure, absolutely sure on this point: That, within a space of one minute, he gave two glances towards the waist of the ship. In the first glance, he was certain, he saw nothing out the way. Nothing was there save the white surfaces of the cabin walls and roof, the aft hatch, and the usual paraphernalia in the stern. On his second glance, less than a minute later, he saw—It.

"Mike," called he, softly.

"Whot is it?" just as softly.

"Ay tank you batter wake de captain."

Mike was electrified. He knew the Swede pretty well; nothing short of something phenomenal could have roused Nels to that extent. In seven steps, Mike, racing along the seaward side of the deck, reached the steersman's side.

"What is it, Swede?" excitedly.

Nelson merely nodded in the direction of the cabin. The Irishman looked, and as his eyes caught sight of what lay on the shore-ward side of the deck, between the rail and the cabin, he felt his hair slowly rising beneath his cap.

An instant's hesitation, and he darted below. And not one minute elapsed before both captain and mate, the former well bundled up and the latter bearing a powerful acetylene lantern, emerged on the deck.

"Well, Mike?" constrainedly, from the captain.

The Irishman silently took the lantern, and turned it upon the deck beside the cabin. There stood an enormous object, like a huge boulder. Two minutes before, it had not been there.

A swift examination, and the truth was known. Beneath all its coating of ocean growths, was revealed the long-lost "nugget" of the old *Cristobel*. It was that, and nothing less.

But how did it get there? Water was dripping from the stone, forming a large pool on the deck. On the rail was more water, and seaweed and bits of broken shells. On the hull itself was a large wet area, and more shells. As for the surrounding waves, a thorough search showed nothing.

How did the stone get there? How could it *possibly* have gotten there? When it was weighed at Panama, it tipped the scales at nearly fifteen tons!

CHAPTER III

What Happened to the Sphinx

PAUSING only to remark that Captain Butler lived to see his cherished plan succeed, with hundreds of servants' children infinitely better off because of his work, the investigator of the "Colossal Mysteries" is taken to still another part of the world. And, whereas the affair off the coast of Chile took place in December—which is to say, summer, south of the equator—of 1922, this next event occurred nearly two years later, the day before Thanksgiving, in the northern part of Africa.

The account begins with a very commonplace matter: Two American tourists, about five o'clock in the evening, stepped into a waiting automobile in front of a hotel in Cairo. One Arab, kneeling on the running board, accompanied them. The younger American himself drove the car.

Little was said as the car passed through the magnificent avenues of the modern part of the city. Presently, however, an older part of the capital was reached, and both visitors became interested enough in the ever-changing, yet changeless hordes of unfathomable Orientals. It was not until the car had crossed the Nile and was approaching the railroad at the west, that the older American spoke anything that called for a reply.

"I was just thinking, Redpath," with a sudden chuckle, "that these Arabs we're passing would've been pretty badly shocked, twenty years ago, to see a sight like us!"

"You mean, our car." Redpath slowed the machine and drove carefully alongside the road, as they overtook and passed a caravan of camels, desert-bound. "I understand that the first of these 'devil wagons' was pretty badly bunged up, Shaw. The Arabs stoned the driver."

"But now, they're used to it," commented Shaw. "Just what I've always held. People can get used to anything, if they've got to."

"And yet, there's a limit." Redpath seemed, for all his youthfulness—or, shall we say, because of it?—more

earnest and thoughtful than his elderly acquaintance. "There's some things that won't stand for change. They're perfect. They'll remain as they are for all time."

"Don't believe it," stoutly. By this time an unobstructed view of the first pyramid was to be had. "Everything's got to change. Change is the only thing that's permanent. Change!"

"You don't say so. How about *that?*" And Redpath pointed to the great Egyptian monument just ahead.

Shaw waved a hand, airily. "That? A mere pimple on the face of time! Another few seconds out of eternity, and"—he puffed a cloud of smoke from his cigar—"gone, like that!"

Redpath made no comment for a while, being too much occupied with the problem of driving. He wasn't accustomed to a roadway in such fearful condition. In fact, the topic of Change versus Changelessness was not revived until about three hours later, when the Americans, camped for the night near the two pyramids which flanked the Sphinx, sat down for a final smoke following their supper.

"This Arab," commented Redpath, "is a dandy. He's really managed to keep all the other grafters away. You had the right hunch, Shaw, about paying him five in advance and holding up the other five until we get back."

"Yes, and I generally have the right hunch, too, young fellow!" But there was nothing patronizing about Shaw's manner. No one would have guessed that there was twenty years difference in their ages. "I was right about getting here in the evening, so's to view the monuments by the morning sun. You'll see that I'm right; much better view than most tourists get."

"Yes, but it's tough about our water-supply. These bags make the water taste second-hand."

A short silence, broken only by the stertorous breathing of their Arab, who had gone to sleep. His head was carefully sheltered from the moon's rays. Redpath had an idea, and turned the rays of their portable searchlight upon the snoring mound, and waited. Presently the Arab turned over, uneasily, and without half awakening, he twisted about until he got his head on the other side of the packing-case that had sheltered him from the moon.

"See that?" chuckled Redpath. "Subconsciously, he believed that the moon has moved in the sky. And he is afraid to sleep with his head exposed to it!" A pause of thoughtfulness, then: "I wonder if that isn't a pretty good argument?"

"What for?"

"In favor of Changelessness. This fellow's subconscious mind. He has the same subconscious mentality that his ancestors had, thousands of years ago!"

"Pretty fair," admitted Shaw. "Pretty fair; no use talking, it is."

"And yet, young fellow, how long d'you suppose this moon-mad notion of his'd last, if something should happen to the moon? Suppose a comet should smash the moon, for instance. Wouldn't his subconscious change?"

"But nothing's going to happen to the moon!" Redpath looked as though slightly shocked. He will be better understood when it is said that, like many other young men of wealth in America, his education, while very deep, was not at all broad. In short, extremely conservative.

"The moon is there to stay!" he insisted. "So is the earth, the stars, and everything else in the universe! Only the details change! The big facts, the big principles, never change!"

And Redpath wisely shook his head, an assured smile playing about the corners of his mouth. He was staring at the Sphinx as he added: "No; when it comes to the great principles of life, Shaw, my mind is as changeless as—that Sphinx!"

Shaw peered through the darkness towards the great, lion-bodied head. "That! Why—she's changing all the time, Redpath!"

"The Sphinx? Change? Where do you get that stuff?"

"Oh, perhaps you're thinking something like this, Redpath: 'Changeless as the Sphinx'. But it's bunk, young fellow; bunk; Besides, that isn't the correct quotation.

"Redpath, that stone is very slowly disintegrating; and the time's coming when it'll go back to the sands it came from!"

"That Sphinx," deliberately, aggressively, "will be right where it is now, until the end of time!"

"Oh, don't be so darned stubborn! You know better than that, Redpath. Why, the blamed thing changes with every sandstorm; it changes with every cold snap. It's changing every day; every night!"

"Pure, unadulterated nonsense," calmly lighting a fresh cigar.

"Is that so!" Shaw grabbed the storage battery, and handed the searchlight to the other. "Grab this, and come on. We'll have a look at her!"

It was beginning to get a little cool, and both men welcomed the exercise. A vigorous trudging through the sand, and presently the pair were standing in front of the great, rock-hewn monument of the ancient Egyptian civilization.

FOR a while, like all who look upon the enormous face for the first time, both men remained silent. Despite the fact that they were Americans, neither made any calculations as to the weight of the rock, or the years that must have been spent in sculpturing that tremendous head out of the living stone. Each remembered having read that it stood more than sixty feet high, a close rival in size to the head of the Statue of Liberty. The flashing rays of the searchlight somehow made the figures seem too small. Truly, it was a marvel that the ancients could have achieved such a thing.

"Of course, you observe its nose?" at last, from Shaw. "Or rather, the place where the nose used to be. Gone now, for hundreds of years. What've you got to say for changelessness, now?"

"Just as much as ever," stolidly. "How do we know that this thing was made with a nose? Perhaps it was designed just as we see it!"

"Without a nose!" Shaw was staggered, more with the coolness with which the idea was stated, than with the notion itself. "Well, it ain't impossible." He led the way closer. "Better take a look at the mouth, Redpath."

The light plainly revealed the effects of constant exposure to the storms of the desert—storms and the many onslaughts from Arabian spears. The rock was fairly eaten away from the upper lip. Grinding and polishing the face of the stone, the sand had made unmistakable inroads upon the features. But Redpath would not admit it.

"May have been built that way," he insisted. "Of course, it doesn't seem reasonable to suppose that it was. I'll admit that.

"But I'm dead sure you go too far, Shaw, when you claim that the Sphinx is changing—every day, I think you said."

"Not a bit of it," sturdily. "It's changing right now, before your eyes! Fact. Only, it's too minute for us to see."

"Before our eyes! You've got to show me," with irritating nonchalance.

Shaw became more than slightly excited. "See here, you're too all-fired stubborn for any use! You know mighty well I'm right. You're just holding out because—"

"I'll bet you anything you like," interrupted the other,

aggravatingly, "that this Sphinx does *not* change in the slightest, overnight! I'll leave it to any scientist! It doesn't change!"

"It does!" flatly. "And I'll gamble on it with anybody!"

"How much?" insolently.

"Any—amount—you damned—" Shaw stopped in the middle of his emphatic reply. His face changed; an idea had struck him. And he smiled grimly as he went on:

"See here, young fellow! I don't like to bet money on a sure thing like this. It's like taking money from a baby. I know I'm right and you'll just throw your money away. I won't bet—money!"

"All right," with a sneer. "If you haven't got the courage, why—"

"As I say, I won't bet for money." There was a new, a steely look in Shaw's eyes, now. "But I'll put up another kind of a wager, and see if you're man enough to take me up!

"The proposition is this, Redpath: This Sphinx changes a little bit, each and every night. We'll leave it up to a vote of two out of three scientists. How's that?"

"All right. But what's the bet?"

"Punishment, for whoever loses. I'm so dead sure I'm right, I'm willing—if I lose—to come back here to the Sphinx and climb to the top, and kiss the rock! We'll say, I'm to make a pilgrimage here every ten years, to do the same thing!"

"Fair enough. What about me?"

"If you lose—if we learn that the old girl really does change overnight—then, since you're so infernally sure of your stand, you're to do this:

"You've got to change your clothes six times a day for the next six months!"

Redpath gravely considered. "For six months?"

"Not a day less!"

"All right! I'll take you up on that, Shaw!"

The two men shook hands. Then, feeling rather ashamed, perhaps, they stood for some time playing the searchlight over the great countenance, and studying the baffling expression of its weather-beaten features.

As they returned to camp, Redpath switched off the light; they strode through the sand for some minutes in silence, enjoying the effects of the moonlight, upon the desert. Queer shadows loomed from behind sand heaps, and changed the landscape into a gray and black one, full of possibilities for those who are susceptible to fancies. Redpath was practical, but Shaw had an imagination. And it was he, who, shortly before reaching camp, stopped suddenly and uttered an odd exclamation.

"Redpath! Did you see that?"

"What?" curiously.

"That pyramid! I thought it—moved!"

Redpath laughed, maliciously. "Moved! That pyramid? Sure it didn't stand on its head, Shaw?"

The older man had recovered from his surprise, and now looked very much abashed. He took out a handkerchief, and wiped his forehead.

"My eyes, I guess. Might have been a camel, moving around behind the thing. Fooled me, all right."

But Redpath noticed that his companion cast more than one mystified glance at the huge heap of rock before reaching the camp. And, the last thing before getting under the blankets, Shaw raised his head and looked long and earnestly at the object which had startled him.

"By George," he muttered, mainly to himself. "I could have sworn that I saw *something* move, over there! Something as big as the pyramid, or I'll eat my hat!"

But the unaccustomed exercise had the usual effect. Within a very few minutes both men were emulating the Arab's example. As to whether they, like he, slept audibly, there is no evidence one way or the other. The automobile was the only witness.

As afterwards told by Redpath and Shaw, the hour when they were awakened was in the neighborhood of three o'clock, and the moon had set. Each described the event in the same language: a mild earthquake, very much prolonged, and accompanied by a fitful breeze. It did not awaken the Arab. He may have been accustomed to earthquakes. But both Americans, after looking at their watches, lay for several minutes experiencing the sensation. They were not frightened; they were not near anything that could fall on them. Each set it down in his memory as an uncommon, but not unpleasant, adventure.

Within half an hour the camp was again silent. Pitch darkness, relieved only by star-light, once more settled over the place. Once there was a subdued crackle or two from the auto, as pieces of metal reacted to the change of temperature. That, together with the ticking of watches and the sound of three men breathing, was all that broke the stillness.

As might be supposed, it was the Arab who first awoke in the morning. The sun was yet an hour from rising, but it was fairly light already. And the first the Americans knew of it, there came the voice of the Arab, flat on his carpet, his face towards Mecca, as he repeated the unintelligible lingo which he believed would save his soul. The Americans listened without moving their heads. In a moment, the Arab was done; he got up, and rolled his carpet. Next second he turned around and looked towards the west; and his voice broke into a terrified shriek.

"Allah is great! Great is Allah, and Mohammed is his only Prophet!"

And down he fell upon his knees, gibbering. The two Americans sprang to their feet, startled, looking at one another in amazement. Then, their gazes turned towards the west, and they saw.

The head of the Sphinx was—gone! Gone completely; it looked as though it had been snapped off.

"That earthquake?" breathed Shaw, his flesh creeping.

Redpath stood as though petrified. His gaze wandered, shakily, to one side. And he gave a gasp of awe.

"You win!" he whispered, and pointed a trembling finger.

On top of the nearest pyramid, securely planted upon the flat space at the very summit, stood the missing head of the Egyptian Sphinx.

CHAPTER IV

The Amazing Theft

IN collecting the data which is here presented, the writer has culled, from the long list of unaccountable events that were attributed to the Nth Man, only sufficient to make a chain strong enough to sustain the astounding truth. No attempt has been made to even hint at the many peculiar incidents which a stricter historian would include. Besides, some of these incidents are doubtful.

For instance, the matter of hanging black crepe on the Statue of Liberty, on the night of July Fourth, 1926: Why should people blame this on the Nth Man? Almost any passing helicopter, manned by a daring anarchist, could have committed this sardonic piece of sacrilege. The mere fact that the crepe was unusual material, afterwards traced to Thibet, does not change the situation. The stunt certainly was not characteristic of It.

So one had better follow the simple chain here presented. This brings the series to 1927, early in the spring; March 28, to be exact. And the location of this staggering affair was staid, matter-of-fact Europe, where nothing miraculous had happened for centuries. Moreover, whereas the preceding mysteries had had outdoor settings, this took place under a roof.

This roof covered a large, three-story structure in the city of Hamburg, Germany. The building, some hundred feet square and soundly built of steel and stone, housed the bank known to the world as the Zollverein Internationale. And, although it has nothing to do with the matter, it may be mentioned that the roof was made of very fine Spanish tiling, for the bank was designed in a modified Mission style. Hamburg took especial pride in it.

On the evening previous to the day in question, a man of peculiar personality left a certain hotel about six blocks from the bank, and quietly strode down the street. It being almost midnight, the man was given a quiet scrutiny by two or three policemen, each of whom allowed him to pass without question, after noting his dignified bearing and the obvious elegance of his attire. Seemingly, a rich American tourist, out for a stroll before turning in.

Upon reaching the bridge over the Binnenalster, the stranger paused and leaned on the railing, apparently lost in thought. One policeman passed him there. Immediately afterwards, the stranger sauntered on, shortly arriving opposite the Zollverein Internationale.

There he paused and deliberately surveyed the structure. Two witnesses corroborate one another in this. The stranger remained nearly two minutes, carefully taking in every detail of the bank, especially the heavy grill work which protected the windows nearest the vaults.

Then he passed on. Reaching the next corner, he disappeared, taking a turn to the right. This should have brought him back to the river, further upstream; and in fact he was later seen, three blocks away from the bank, studying the waters from the railing of another bridge. This time, when he moved on, he walked in the direction of the hotel from which he had come; but he never reached the place. He was never seen again.

Only within the last few years has the truth about this stranger become known. His disappearance, it seems, was a perfectly natural thing, under the circumstances. For, curious though it may seem, this stranger was the cause of the extraordinary affair of the Zollverein Internationale.

Upon leaving the bridge upstream from the bank (we know, now) the stranger strolled for a short distance in the direction of his hotel. Then, reaching a street which shall here be nameless, he turned to his left; and after walking a trifle over two blocks, he came to an abrupt halt in front of a quiet, unpretentious residence.

This house, by reason of its standing on a slight elevation, overlooked a good deal of the city. And, in the foreground of its view, lay the dim white walls of the bank.

The stranger cast a keen glance in each direction, before running up the steps. Then, he gave an unusually long ring to the bell, followed by two more, very short and crisp. Almost instantly the door opened. Like a flash he darted in; and the door was as swiftly closed. All this, without a light being shown.

Once inside, however, the stranger quietly produced a small, electric light, which he calmly switched on and then handed to the person who had opened the door. This person, a woman, turned the light full in the stranger's face; and for ten or more seconds subjected him to a silent, but thorough scrutiny, during which she referred several times to three photographs which she held in one hand. In the end she seemed satisfied.

"Come," said she, in German; and led the way up an old-fashioned staircase. The man followed, showing no surprise when, after reaching the top of the stairs, the woman led him down a short corridor and then began mounting another flight. In all this, no light was used other than that from the little lamp.

Shortly, the two reached a door on the third floor. The woman stood aside for the man to enter; and, keeping his hands conspicuously in his side pockets, the stranger stepped in. The woman followed, and closed and locked the door.

Next moment she pressed a button, and the room was flooded with a curious radiance. It was a deep, red light, which came from concealed sources. And the man gave a startled exclamation.

"Fräulein! You should have pulled the curtains!"

The woman smiled. It was a slow, patient smile, queerly distorted by the odd lighting effect. She shook her head.

"Nein, mein herr. The window glass is green in color. And, as you know, red light cannot pass green glass."

The man made a quick gesture. "Pardon me. I might have known that you would be careful, fräulein." He looked around, and selected a straight-backed chair of some old Bavarian design. He paid no attention to the other furnishings of the room, which might be described as a combination of library and sewing-room. "Your credentials, please, fräulein."

The woman silently drew, from her bosom, a small envelope. This she handed to the American, who carefully examined the photographs and other data he found. Apparently he was satisfied, for he returned everything with a curt nod.

He was perhaps forty. The woman noted heavy, determined lines about his mouth, and a coldly calculating expression in his eyes. A man to be reckoned with, certainly.

"We may as well come right down to business," said the woman, her voice as well as her appearance typifying all that is generally associated with the autocratic classes of Germany. "You have come, I understand, to collaborate with me in a rather extraordinary enterprise. Suppose we understand one another perfectly?"

"Very well," agreed the American. "To put it in a word, fräulein, I have been commissioned by a certain American of vast wealth, to bring about certain changes in Europe. These changes, naturally, are such as will benefit my client. You see, I am being quite frank."

"That is much the best way, mein herr. Now—what results do you wish to secure?"

"The overthrow of every republic in Europe!"

"And—why?"

"That is my client's affair!"

The woman nodded slowly. "Quite so. There remains just one point: How do you intend to go about it?"

"There are two methods, fräulein. One is to induce"—he used the word with sarcastic significance—"induce various officials in these republics to adopt policies more to my client's liking."

"I am afraid," softly, "that it is far too late to talk of such a method. Practically all these officials are honest, strange though that may seem." She paused. "I see from your face that you are already satisfied on this score."

The American cleared his throat. "I only mentioned the method because I was instructed to do so. You are sure, fräulein, that it will not work?"

"Quite."

"No other way than *your* way?"

"None."

"State it!"

THE woman stepped to a table which stood in the center of the room. From a drawer she produced a large tape-wound envelope. This she placed in the American's hand, and quietly resumed her seat.

Hill deliberately scanned the documents. These consisted of several closely typewritten sheets, some maps, two charts and a small sheaf of memoranda. Within

ten minutes, the American had caught the drift of it all.

"By jove!" he ejaculated, relapsing into his own tongue. "This is the right dope!"

"I beg pardon?"

"The fault was mine," resumed the German. "I must say, fräulein, if this plan is of your making, then you are an extremely clever woman!"

She made a deprecatory move of the hands, an expression that betrayed her mixed ancestry. "Unfortunately, I am not that competent. It is the work of another."

"Who, fraulein?"

"Who would one suppose?"

Hill's brows contracted. "Not—not the"—

She nodded. "None other. Even though in exile, Wilhelm is yet to be reckoned with!"

"You are quite right, Herr Hill; the plan is an excellent one. It is complete; it is sound; it cannot fail! Given the money—your American money!—and within a week, Germany shall be once more within the grip of her former rulers!"

The man's eyes flashed. "And then?" excitedly.

"All Europe, one monarchy!" her face lighted up. "A few swift blows, and—democracy shall end!"

The American leaped to his feet. "By Jove!" in unmistakable delight. He began to pace the room. From time to time he stopped to re-read some part of the plan, and to ask eager questions.

"This overlooks nothing, fräulein?"

"Nothing! Publicity, munitions—even telephone tolls! Everything, mein herr! The people have always had a soft spot for royalty in their hearts. All that is needed is—money!"

Hill came up short, and suddenly wheeled upon the woman. His brows narrowed with suspicion.

"All very well, fräulein! And yet, how comes it that you, an anarchist, are thus plotting to place monarchy back on the throne again?"

She laughed, a short and disagreeable laugh, which showed an entirely new side to her character. "I really did not think you were so dense as that, Herr Hill.

"There are anarchists, and there are anarchists. A few fools are sincere in their desire for no government at all. But the real leaders—pah!

"We are merely a little more clever than you supposed, Herr Hill."

"You mean, that you are really in sympathy with the autocrats? Even your anarchists—in America?"

"All who really count, mein herr. Their function is to stir up violence, so as to give your autocrats an excuse to persecute the true reformers. Surely, you knew of this before!"

"Yes," dubiously. "But I never could believe it, fräulein. In America, we are apt to take things for granted."

He fingered the documents once more. Apparently he made up his mind at that instant, for he turned, abruptly, and said:

"We shall call it a bargain, fräulein. The money shall be yours!"

The woman's eyes glowed. "Herr Hill—you are willing that my organization shall do this?"

"Fräulein, the matter was left entirely to my discretion. The man who is backing me, gave me instructions to go ahead if I felt satisfied that the plan would succeed. And—I am satisfied!"

"Good!" She swept to her feet. "When can we proceed, mein herr?"

"At once! This very night!"

The woman stopped short. "You mean—the money is already—at our disposal?"

He nodded. "Enough and to spare, fräulein!"

"But" — She seemed bewildered. "Surely, you cannot have so much money in Hamburg, mein herr!"

He chuckled, dryly. "You do not understand American methods, fräulein. The cash arrived this afternoon, secretly, by a fleet of submarines. It was unloaded at an underwater dock, and conveyed by tunnel to the bank!"

The woman reached out a hand, as though to steady herself. "You have it all?" she whispered. "The American gold—for which our Cause has prayed all these years?"

"Enough to wipe out your national debt!"

The woman recovered herself. "Pardon," she smiled, a little shakily. "But it is very—very unnerving, after one has waited so long. Good news—may be hardest to bear.

"You are willing, then, that I shall summon the committee?"

"Of course," curtly. "I am instructed to make terms only with the properly accredited officers of your organization."

"And—when?"

"Right now, fräulein!"

She picked up a telephone, and gave a number. Presently she was speaking, in a guarded voice:

"Franz—this is Bertha. The eagle is ready for his breakfast. Bring the waiters. Do you—understand?"

She replaced the instrument. "It is done, Herr Hill." Her face was wreathed in smiles, now. "You shall meet our executives inside the next half hour."

"Good."

The woman's nerves demanded action. She began to walk excitedly about the room, just as the American had done a short while before. And now it was she who exclaimed.

"You know not what this means to us—to me, Herr Hill! It means release from that odious social democracy. It means that we, who are entitled to the highest places in the scheme of things, shall once more come into our own!" She laughed, almost girlishly. "Where is the money, Herr Hill? Which bank?"

He strode to the window, and peered through the glass in the direction of the Zollverien Internationale. "Put out the light, fräulein," said he. "You shall see for yourself."

She extinguished the red light, and started towards the American's side. At the same instant, there came a peculiar sound from without. It was a mumbling roar, like that of a distant surf. Simultaneously the house trembled and shook, as though in the grip of an earthquake. It was over in a moment or so; everything was quiet and still inside two minutes.

"What was that?" sharply, from the woman. And she darted to the window, where the American, who had managed to open the window, was leaning half out the room in the intensity of his gazing.

The woman caught his shoulder, and held him fast. "Look out!" she whispered. "You'll be seen!"

And then, on the instant, the American gave a queer exclamation, as of fear. He caught a hand to his throat, tottered, and collapsed. The German woman bent over him.

His heart had failed him.

The woman straightened. She turned at once to the window. What had caused the tragedy? She stared with all her eyes in the direction the American had gazed, towards the spot where the great bank had stood, a few blocks away.

The bank was no longer there. It had disappeared as completely as though swept from the face of the earth. Nothing was left save the foundation walls and the cellar; money, watchmen, walls and roof, had vanished from the sight of man. A small crowd of gaping citizens was already collecting. But the bank—was not there.

As for the American, Hill, he was never heard from again. He was buried by the anarchists, who saw no other way of escaping publicity and persecution.

And to this day, not the slightest trace has ever been found of the building or the contents of the Zollverein Internationale.

CHAPTER V

Where Nothing Grew Before

SO far, the performances of the Nth Man have lacked the quality of constructiveness. That is to say, the miracles have never been more than corrective, in their effects upon man. In fact, some of the incidents have been almost mischievous in their nature; the stunts bear many of the earmarks of youthful destructiveness.

So the next mystery—the last but one before the stupendous climax to the series—shows a decided change for the better in the mentality of its perpetrator. Perpetrator, however, is a hard name for the unknown Benevolence which resurrected a dead continent. There are a hundred million people in this world who are, practically, worshippers at the shrine of the Nth Man, because of what was done for them on the seventeenth day of December, 1928.

The circumstances will be easily understood by any who have passed through an East Indian hurricane. Typhoons, the natives call these storms; the name is of small consequence. Everyone knows that the stoutest of ships never deliberately face one of them. And the electric freighter, *Mammoth III*, which sailed from Vancouver on the tenth of that month, was commanded by as cautious a sailor as ever handled a crew.

But not even Captain McTavish could know, as he passed the Marshall Islands west-bound, that a hurricane was raging with such violence, only a hundred miles ahead, that both of the Philippine weather-planes had been put entirely out of commission by the suddenness of the onslaught; so that some six or seven freighters, like the *Mammoth III*, were steadily and confidently forging ahead into an area of extreme danger. McTavish only knew that he was making good time.

The storm struck when the ship was yet a thousand miles from New Guinea. There was, of course, the usual low-pressure warning; but it gave the captain scarcely more time than to realize that he could not hope to make Gilolo Passage. Not in such a sea; the wind, too, was sure to become a thing to run away from, not to bargain with.

And an hour later saw the ship, her decks as bare as a plate, scuttling before a wind that mocks all description. McTavish was glad that he had a freighter; in the old days, before aircraft absorbed all passenger traffic, the steamer might have carried a thousand passengers, each of them an enormous problem in the presence of such a turmoil. But the two dozen people aboard the huge freighter were sea-farers.

"A rare experience, captain," came a hail from the wireless room, as McTavish passed beneath the companion-way. It was the voice of young Sanson, the day-shift radio man. "Picked up five others, so far; all in the same fix!"

McTavish inwardly marvelled that Sanson's voice could carry above the racket. He could not know that the radio man had been yell leader for the Cardinals, in many a desperate football game between Stanford and California. The captain merely said:

"Looks as if the weather-planes have got theirs, Sanson. Else we should ha' heard from them, by now."

"Too bad. I pity anybody up in the air on a day like this." At which the captain went away, smiling grimly to himself. Even the radio man was a true son of the sea!

Wherever the captain went, it was the same; all hard at their tasks, if anything, more earnestly engaged than usual. For all that any man knew, the ship might be in momentary danger of going to pieces; certainly every joint in the steel-braced structure was complaining of the extra duty. But the humans made no complaint.

Only one man down below was even curious as to what was going on in the world outside. He was a young preternaturally serious chap who sat in the midst of a wilderness of dials, indicators, meters, levers and handwheels. The control of the ship was at his fingers' tips. A telephone was clamped to his head; also, in case of accident to the wires, the good old gongs were also ready for use.

"Where's Irons?" McTavish inquired, noting that the assistant engineer held the post. There were two engineers, of course, and Irons was supposed to be on duty. "Nothin' serious, Cooper?"

"I think not, sir. He said he had got very little sleep last night, due to an uneasiness which he always feels when a storm is brewing. I fancy he expects to relieve Mr. Seymour from time to time during the night."

"I see." McTavish started to go. "Of course, suppose anything happens, my lad, lose no time in callin' him."

"No, sir." A slight hesitation, then: "Is there reason to expect anything to—to happen?"

"Always, in a starm like this!" But the captain's face was not at all anxious. "Ye mus' know, m' lad, that we canna see a knot ahead, from th' bridge. 'Tis a matter only o' keepin' our wits; for no mon knows which way we go."

The youngster's eyes opened wide. "Is it true, then; the compass is worthless in this sort of a storm?"

"Weel, suppose we ca' it, un-reliable. At least, it tells us we're headin' mare sou' than narth. That's somethin', isn't it?" And the captain's grim smile brought an answering curve to young Cooper's mouth. He did not know that McTavish spoke the literal truth.

Back on the bridge, the captain surveyed one of the windows. The steersman's coat was thrust into the place where the glass had been. McTavish mentally added ten miles an hour to his previous estimate of a hundred for the wind's velocity; and, securing a spare jacket, he started to fit it about the shoulders of the man at the wheel.

Instead of submitting, however, the sailor shook off the captain's hands. "I'm half roasting, as it is," he explained. He glanced at the figure of his mate, dozing precariously in a chair at the other end of the "coop." Every half minute his head would droop, whereupon the ship would hurl him half out of the chair; and back he would crawl again, all without opening his eyes. "I hate to bother Billy, sir; but if you don't mind—"

MCTAVISH took the wheel. The sailor staggered down to the cabin, there to stand in front of a forced draught, and to revive. Within ten minutes he was back, much refreshed.

"Thank you, sir. By the way"—for he was a cultured young Canadian, that sailor—"by the way, what's our cargo, may I ask?"

"Ye dinna know? Mon—ye should na' come aboard a craft except ye know her cargo! 'Tis"—McTavish stopped, remembering that seamen were no longer slaves of superstition, but of science. Instead of finishing what he had started to say, the captain answered the question:

"'Tis a curious bit o' freight, lad. The ship's a travellin' nursery."

"Nursery!"

"Aye Th' horticultural variety, lad; not th' kind ye were raised in.

"We're carryin' near to ten million trees, an' every one is two parts grown, a'ready. All bound for th' Narthern Territory."

"Ah!" with a flash of understanding. "So Australia has finally come to her senses, captain!"

"Ye seem to know mare about it than mesel'" cautiously. "Seems, ye can tell me somethin', noo."

"I don't know the whole affair, sir. But I've always understood that the Northern Territory is rich in possibilities; only, it hasn't had a chance. For years it was at a standstill, due to the Commonwealth refusing to allow private enterprise to open a suitable railway into the district.

"Lately, however, a syndicate has extended the line north from Adelaide, past Owen's Spring and Woods Lake, all the way to Palmerston."

"Which same is our port," interjected the other.

"I knew that much, anyhow, sir. Well, they also built another line from Perth north-east into the Kimberley country, and from there over to Palmerston. The work is barely finished. To encourage the syndicate, the Commonwealth had to donate every third section; but it will probably be worth while, in the long run."

"So, these trees o' ours be destined t' build up th' country," commented the captain.

"Yes; and I shouldn't wonder, sir, but that the future of the country depends largely upon this one ship. Now that I have started thinking about it, I recall having read that this shipment was raised, partly under cover, at a cost of some fifty million pounds. These trees are —let me see—four years old, sir. The syndicate is really banking on them, if I understand the thing rightly. Unless, by transplanting these trees, it can get immediate results along horticultural lines, it forfeits contracts of some sort with settlers upon whom the syndicate is absolutely dependent for future support."

"Queer," muttered the captain. "I know, now; someone told me about it, an' I ha' forgot. I was worrit at th' time, by hearing' that th' cargo were so heavy insured."

"I dare say," rattled on the sailor. His memory of what he had read was now thoroughly awakened. "It seems that the syndicate went to great expense to duplicate the exact climatic conditions, in their hothouses, which these trees must encounter when they are placed in Australian soil. The idea is, of course, to take advantage of the recent rains and secure a foothold before the dry season comes.

"By doing this, you see, the desert will have something with which to hold the moisture. The trees have a headstart. Hitherto, it has been a hard matter to grow things, on account of occasional droughts; dry spells, such as in the past, have driven the settlers into considering imported labor. The climate, of course—"

"'Tis na place for a white mon," evidently quoting someone in whom McTavish had confidence.

"But these trees will make it very different, sir! Once let them get a fair start—and there's thousands of settlers on the spot, now, fairly itching to get their hands on this nursery—and the climate will become as good as any in the same latitude."

"I belie e ye're right," responded the other. "In fact, I know ye are; I've heard a' this before, but I've had ither things t' think about. Th' Commonwealth will lose th' only chance it ever had, should anything happen—"

He closed his mouth firmly, and turned to go. At the same instant the sailor, peering sharply into the wilderness ahead of the ship, gave a startled exclamation. The captain wheeled, and looked.

"Breakers!" he roared. "Put her over—quick!"

The sailor was already twirling the wheel. Down below, the ship's marvelous machinery was responding perfectly. Under ordinary circumstances, nothing wrong could have happened.

But a wind like that is not ordinary. Like a seaplane approaching a beach, the giant ship rushed headlong towards the reef. And before the vessel could answer to her rudder, before any human power could prevent, the stern of the ship was smashed. Smashed, with a jar that shook the freighter from end to end, just as she swung past the west end of the reef. And the captain did not need the report that was shouted up to him from the engine-room:

"Great God, sir; the stern's a wreck! Half the propellers, and the rudder—all gone, sir!"

The captain merely bit his lips. Next moment, however, he was hanging on for his life as the huge boat, helpless as a cockle-shell in the grip of that raging fury, thrashed about wildly, her head totally lost, and nothing but a miracle to intervene between her and utter destruction.

"God save us," solemnly pronounced the Scotchman. "We canna last anither hour!"

THE three men quit the bridge. There was no use in remaining there any longer. And when they reached the cabin, they found most of the ship's company there ahead of them. Only the radio man remained at his post.

"'Tis a thousand t' one against us," McTavish calmly announced to the silent group that faced him. "My best guess is that we're nearing' th' Solomons, wi' no ship closer than two thousand mile, good enough t' help us.

"What say ye t' a wee bit o' somethin' t' eat?"

And supper was eaten quite as though none realized that the longer the ship remained whole, the smaller her chances became. It had been a question of hours; now, it was a matter of minutes. But not a nerve showed a sign of giving way, although the strain of waiting is the hardest strain of all.

It was, each knew, a waste of time to even think of taking to the boats. Fine affairs though they were, they could not live ten seconds in such a sea. No; they could do nothing but wait, and make the most of such additional life as might be granted them.

The radio man joined the group. "Mate is fixing up the reserve equipment," he reported, through a sandwich. "The regular outfit is gone west.

"The last message, captain, was from the Control at Manila. Said that my stuff had been received at six different places, and the resultant figures out at very nearly 165 east longitude, and practically on the equator."

"Just what I guessed!" triumphantly, from McTavish. He had dropped all idea of discipline, in the face of what was coming. "Mare than two thousand from port!

"Pass th' bread."

Already darkness, with the swiftness of equatorial regions, had dropped around the craft. If her course had been erratic before, it was now unknowable.

A half hour passed, with everyone wondering how the ship could stand it another second. She had sprung a leak, and was badly canted to the starboard. Presently the captain cast an appraising eye at the wall, estimated that list, and sighed.

"Weel, ma friends, if she holds togither that long, she'll capsize inside o' ten minutes. Has anybody got one o' those triflin' cigarettes? I'm out o' tobaccy."

And it was then, with the disaster practically in sight, that the *Mammoth III* ended her cruise, and at the same time gave to the world the fifth of the Colossal Mysteries. It happened while the captain, striving to hold on to a rail, was maneuvering to light a cigarette for the radio man.

The ship gave a tremendous lurch. Down went her

nose; the captain held his breath; she was going to founder, right then! But next second he was staring in wonderment at his friends.

The sea, like a flash, had gone still. No longer did the ship toss and shiver in the grip of the waves. Along her sides the wind still shrieked, as hellishly as ever. But—the sea was still!

"By the Lord!" swore McTavish, reverently. "We've been washed ashore, high and dry!"

He ran to the bridge, with most of the crew at his heels. There, they looked out upon—not the island that the captain had expected, but the sea. Nothing else! On every side, as far as the searchlights could reach, only the raging waters could be seen. Except that these seemed, in that peculiar glare, somewhat further below deck than they had been before, the appearance was just the same as had met their eyes during the day. And yet, the *ship* was still.

"Strange!" muttered the Scotchman. "Have we landed on th' top of a moontain?"

Before he had ceased speaking, the ship began to move. It was a gentle motion, from side to side and up and down, rythmical, regular, systematic. It was not like the toss of a boat in water; it was more like the swaying of a locomotive, together with the rise and fall of a horse. But it was smooth, for all that no man could remain upright an instant without a stiff grasp of something solid. It was like no motion that any seaman ever experienced before.

Not a soul got a wink of sleep that night. That inexplicable, steady motion continued until dawn, with perhaps half a dozen intermissions during which the ship was motionless. Was it in the grip of some unguessably big aircraft?

But the searchlights showed nothing but clouds aloft. There was no explaining the mystery. The storm, they could understand; but a thing like this, that baffled all understanding. Every man was sorely afraid.

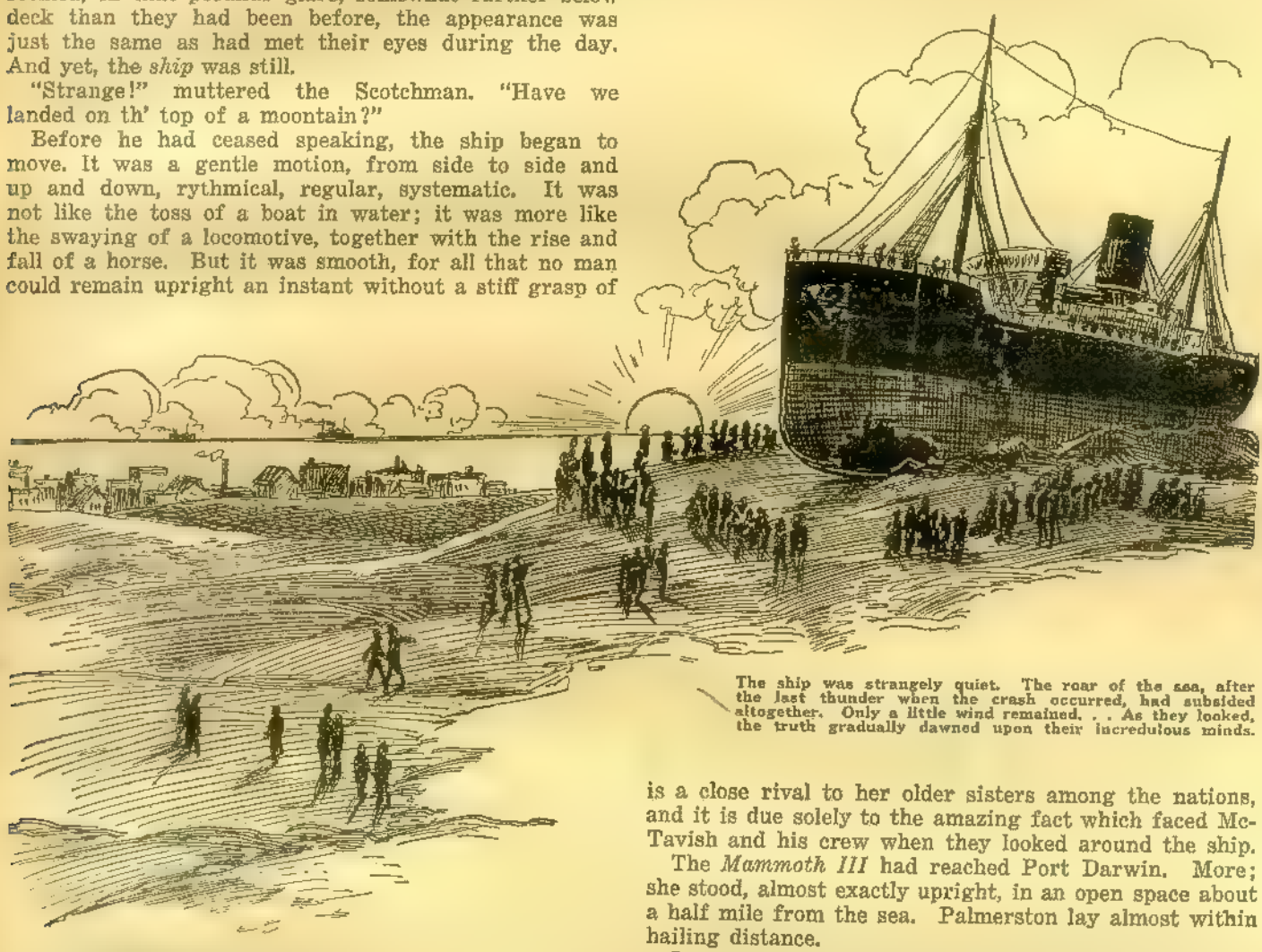
Just before dawn came the crash. The ship struck with such terrific force that everything breakable which still remained whole, was shattered into fragments. This included every electric light. The crew, hurled to the floor, remained for some time helpless and unmoving, waiting for the dawn to become a little less gray.

The ship was strangely quiet. The roar of the sea, after the last thunder when the crash occurred, had subsided altogether. Only a little wind remained. What had happened?

Finally, some went to the bridge. It was getting light enough to see. And as they looked, the truth, very gradually indeed, dawned upon their incredulous minds.

And staring up at them, just as incredulously, all about the ship, were several thousand people whose thoughts will have to be imagined; they cannot be described. However, there must have been some who realized, as they read the name of the supposedly lost freighter, that the future of Australia had become miraculously secured.

These people, today, are among the hundred million who are the Nth Man's worshippers. Today, Australia is a close rival to her older sisters among the nations, and it is due solely to the amazing fact which faced McTavish and his crew when they looked around the ship.



The ship was strangely quiet. The roar of the sea, after the last thunder when the crash occurred, had subsided altogether. Only a little wind remained. . . As they looked, the truth gradually dawned upon their incredulous minds.

The *Mammoth III* had reached Port Darwin. More; she stood, almost exactly upright, in an open space about a half mile from the sea. Palmerston lay almost within hailing distance.

In some inexplicable way or other, the giant freighter had been transported through that awful storm, a distance of over two thousand miles, since nightfall the day before. And now she lay, high and dry, on the soil which was to flourish because of her cargo.

The *Mammoth III* will never go to sea again. But Australia has been raised from the dead.

CHAPTER VI

The Greatest Mystery

THE sixth and last in the series of the "Colossal Mysteries" takes our attention to China, in the year 1930. The date is December 31, which is, of course, the day before New Year's Eve, as now observed by the Chinese in addition to their own holiday. This fact, by the way, may prove more significant than it at first appears.

And, although the incident has nothing whatever to

do with religious affairs of any kind, except very indirectly, the setting of the phenomenon is to be found in the "compound" of the Congregational Mission at Lin Ching, near the crossing of the Great Wall and the river, Hoang-Ho.

In the "office" of this mission, which was perhaps more a hospital than a religious school, sat Miriam Osborn, a Californian, temporarily in sole charge of the post. Surrounded by some half dozen Christianized Chinese girls and aided from time to time by men of the same conversion, she was doing her best until the return of her superior, Mrs. Walsh. And there could be no mistaking the immense relief in the young woman's face as, after binding a dress upon a particularly disagreeable sore, such as many Chinese are afflicted with, she dismissed the "case" with a hurried wave of the hand and eagerly turned to the girl who had just entered.

"Well, Nama?" knowing that the young Chinese would stand there till doomsday without speaking, unless first spoken to. "What is the new—good?"

"Yes — yes, Miss Doctor," rattled forth the girl. "Song Fow, who is up a—mong the tree, is have seen the Missus Doctor's cart, now com—ing!"

Miriam Osborn's natural impulse was to dart out of the office, through the gate of the compound and out into the road, there to leap into Mrs. Walsh's cart and overwhelm that lady with tears and affection. But dignity, in the presence of these grave, decorous people, forbade any demonstration. Instead she waited with an air of great patience until, all formalities over, the two women were finally alone in an inner room.

"Oh, I am so discouraged!" Miss Osborn burst out, her mouth trembling as no Chinese had ever seen it tremble.

"I seem to get nowhere, Mrs. Walsh! Not one in ten remembers the simplest rules of hygiene; and some of the cases I've had to handle lately—well, I thought I had seen the worst, a year ago, but these are just simply —" And the girl shuddered.

Mrs. Walsh was not in the least surprised. She understood the delicate, high-strung girl quite well, and the Chinese, even better. And she knew that the young doctor had been shocked too deeply to feel much relieved by sympathy alone. Mrs. Walsh wisely put another problem into her assistant's mind, instead. Her voice was very sober as she spoke:

"I know exactly how you feel, dear. I had to go through with it all, you remember, several years ago. It is an old story to me now; and lately I have come to look deeper than those awful sores, deeper than their superstition and ignorance. There is something that is to blame for it all. And—I think I have an inkling of the truth!"

Miriam Osborn's personal troubles were instantly forgotten. "You have? You really think you know, at last?" And the girl paused, breathlessly. She had always felt, somehow, that the Chinese mystery was explainable. If only she could understand these people! "What have you found out?"

"Merely an inkling, as I said." Mrs. Walsh sat on the edge of a bed. Miss Osborn remained standing. "But I think it may prove the key to the whole riddle.

"You know that I stayed over at Yokahama, on my way here." She paused significantly. "Well, by good fortune I met Viscount Soraki at the hotel!"

"Viscount Soraki? The liberal whom you have always wanted to meet?"

"He. And he told me things—not too much, for he is a cautious man—but enough to let me form my own conclusions. As to just what he said, I shall have to give it to you from time to time as it occurs to me; it amounts to a great deal. But my conclusions, as gathered from what he told me, are these:

"A certain well-known Oriental government," purposely speaking guardedly, "is now an openly autocratic one. To put it in a word, all our difficulties here —all our problems of superstition, ignorance and vice— are due to the deliberate interference of that country!"

"You believe that?" Miriam's eyes narrowed with anger. "The Chinese are being kept back, in order that —these other people may dominate them?"

Mrs. Walsh nodded, gravely. "Through bribery of the native teachers, and in other ways, the Chinese ancestor-worship is being kept alive. Were it not for this, our Christian and scientific truths would soon be adopted everywhere; for the Chinaman is a lover of the truth, and quick to change his ways, once he is convinced. We are fighting—this other nation's money!"

That night, seated in the little garden around which the buildings of the compound were placed, the two women discussed the facts that the progressive Japanese viscount had confided to Mrs. Walsh. In the end, Miss Osborn asked her superior if there was any hope that the situation would change for the better. Mrs. Walsh looked dubious.

"There is just one possibility. And that, I am afraid, is very remote indeed. I mean this: If something tremendous, something in the nature of a national miracle, should occur, the Chinese might lose faith in ancestor-worship and all the anti-progressiveness that goes with it. For example, suppose some strange malady should wipe out all the school-masters in every province. Such an event would destroy confidence in these men, and therefore in what they taught. And the way would then be open for truth, the truth of Christianity and of science, to reach the hearts of—"

"Hush!" whispered Miss Osborn, clutching her companion's arm. The young woman's eyes were dilated with a curious fear. "Hush, Mrs. Walsh!"

THE older woman, without moving, cast a keen glance about her. And in a whisper as guarded as her assistant's, she inquired: "What was it? Did you hear something, or—"

"Yes! Outside the compound! A queer noise, like— like the thunder of a distant waterfall!"

The oddity of the comparison struck Mrs. Walsh with peculiar force. She gave the girl a sharp glance.

"You saw nothing?"

"No; but" — The girl paused as though aware that there was something very lacking in what she had said. She threw back her head, and managed to speak in her natural voice as she added: "Never mind! Probably— my nerves! Go on with what you were saying, please!"

"Well, I haven't any more thoughts on the subject. As I say, unless something happens to change the other nation's policy towards China, something must happen to change the Chinese policy towards its ancestors. Otherwise, the future is even blacker than the past!"

"What do you mean by that?" in sudden anxiety.

Mrs. Walsh bent and whispered in her assistant's ear. The girl's face went white. Her lips moved convulsively, and a single word escaped her:

"War!"

"Yes," from the older woman, with quiet certainty. "And conceive, if you can, of great hordes of well-armed, obedient Celestials, under the control of that emperor— overrunning the Anglo-Saxon world!"

Once more that strange feeling of conviction, of moral assurance that the truth had been spoken, gripped and chilled the heart of Miriam Osborn. And a great wave of grief, as for the lives to be lost, the misery to be suffered, surged over her and left her sobbing hysterically. Mrs. Walsh, strong woman that she was, stopped and lifted her assistant and carried her bodily into her room.

About eleven o'clock that night, following the usual custom, the two missionaries held a simple watch-night meeting. There were none but the half dozen girl converts, however, to share the experience with them. Most of the Chinese were making the darkness hideous with the usual Celestial methods, from firecrackers to gongs. Fortunately, the compound was located far enough away from the racket, not to be disturbed by it.

But just after midnight, as the little Christian band prepared to disperse, it seemed to them that the noise in the village was inordinately great. To the mechanical noises were added the mingled shouts, wails, screams and chanting of a populace that seemed to have suddenly gone mad. Never had the natives been so noisy.

At the same time, the missionaries became conscious that the earth was trembling. It was far from being a serious earthquake; but it continued, almost without ceasing, for nearly half an hour. At the middle of that period it was severe enough to shake all loose articles down from the walls.

Accompanying it was a very peculiar sound. It reminded Mrs. Walsh of a great storm, as heard through tightly barred windows and doors. It reminded Miss Osborn of something else.

"Like what I heard early this evening!" she exclaimed. "Only, ever so much louder!" But she admitted that this time there was a rumbling, crashing undercurrent which was missing in the first place.

When it was all over, having felt very little alarm about the matter, both women went to bed and slept soundly. In fact, they did not arise till an hour later than usual, the next morning. They ate breakfast without the slightest notion of what had happened.

About eight o'clock, one of the teachers of the village, a "wise man" of whom Mrs. Walsh had spoken as being in the pay of the foreigners, arrived at the head of an extraordinary procession. It comprised several hundred men, women and children; they seemed to have been gathered together within the past few minutes, as though on the spur of some mighty, unseen impulse. And there was something so helpless, so bewildered and uneasy in their attitudes, down to the last soul, that neither of the missionaries thought to feel any misgivings. Time was, when such a horde, descending upon the compound, would have meant a massacre. That morning, however, both women instinctively felt that the mission was a place of refuge, not of mischief, to the crowd that was gathering outside.

"I wonder what it can be," breathed Miss Osborn, as she hurriedly got together all the available surgical dressings. She gave another glance through the window. "They are so quiet! Can it be some new epidemic, Mrs. Walsh!"

The older woman could not say. "Somehow—I don't know why—I think we won't need our kits today." There was a queer look in her eyes. "It is a hunch, if you will pardon the word. Leave your supplies where they are!"

Wondering, the young doctor obeyed. The two stepped side by side into the door-yard. And they marvelled to see that every Chinese who could do so, was crowding into the gate which had always been shunned by more than half the population. What *could* it mean?

"Missus Doctor, and Miss Doctor," began the teacher, as though badly pressed for time; "we come—you make him Chlistian. Light away!"

Both women stood, rigid with astonishment, and stared at one another with unbelieving eyes. Mrs. Walsh was first to recover speech.

"What means this, Sing Fo Tan? You want to be Christian? Just you?" pointing directly at him.

"Me!" He waved a hand to include the crowd behind and about him. "All mes! Want—all Chlistian!"

Something *must* have happened! Something, perhaps a change in the plotters' attitude towards such as this teacher. Mrs. Walsh could not know that a similar scene was being enacted at that moment in each of two hundred other compounds in that part of China. She merely stepped close to the Chinaman, and searched him through and through with her eyes.

"I believe you," said she, suddenly stepping back. There was nothing but eager helplessness in the Celestial's wide open eyes. "Come in then! Everybody—all come in!"

THE crowd swarmed into the compound. Miriam Osborn took a deep breath, and signalled to her half dozen converted helpers. If only each were a hundred times as efficient, now!

But the enormous task was not begun before Mrs. Walsh, herself dealing first with Sing Fo Tan's case, demanded what had caused the strange affair. He had no objection to answering, but he stuttered lamely in a pitiful attempt to find the English for his thoughts. Finally he gave up and resorted to his own tongue, speaking very slowly so that Mrs. Walsh could understand.

"We have come to you because there is no one else to whom to go. My people have come to me, seeking that which I cannot give; and you must help us, because we cannot help ourselves.

"The wisdom of our fathers is no more, Missus Doctor. That which occurred last night has destroyed the faith of my people in the things I have taught them. It has destroyed my own faith, Missus Doctor. None but your faith can be strong enough to withstand this dreadful thing."

"What dreadful thing?" demanded the missionary, a vague feeling of wonder creeping over her. "Speak up, Sing Fo Tan."

"Do you not know?" in surprise. "Surely the Missus Doctor has eyes with which to see!"

And he rose and stepped to a window, and pointed to the north. Mrs. Walsh started to follow him, but before she could leave her chair one of the Chinese girls came running in. It was the girl who had been charged with the care of the wireless telephone, the station being provided with enough apparatus to enable the receiving of any messages from Pekin, or thereabouts. The girl was too excited to use English.

"Quick, Mrs. Doctor! The voice machine is talking! It is from the mission headquarters, in Pekin!"

Sing Fo Tan must wait. Mrs. Walsh hurried into the little room where the instruments were kept. And the moment she adjusted the headpiece, she heard the familiar voice of the missionary who superintended the district.

"Go outside, everybody, and take a look at the Great Wall! And don't show the least astonishment, no matter what you see!"

Half understanding, Mrs. Walsh ran back, and called to her assistant. The two rushed to the window where the old Chinaman still stood. And each saw that which made her doubt her senses, and wonder if the day of miracles had come once more.

The Great Wall of China, that massive barrier against the Tartar tribes, and equally massive barrier, in the minds of the Chinese, against the idea that anything new could possibly be good—that tremendous, and perhaps unequalled work of armies of coolies, fifteen hundred miles long and composed of mountains of stone—the Great Wall of China that had, by its very immensity, blocked the way of progress in the Chinese mind for seventeen centuries, was *gone*. It was effaced—annihilated.

The day before, it had stood there, a few miles north

of the mission. Overnight, it had disappeared. The Great Wall was gone!

CHAPTER VII

From 1920 to 1933

WHEN detectives and others began to investigate the extraordinary events of which the Chinese Wall incident was the last, they invariably made a list of the phenomena and carefully compared them, in the hope of deducing an explanation. Such a list, covering the six episodes in their chronological order, would read something like this:

First, in 1920, the rescue of Florence Neil, then about nine years of age. As said before, this incident was destined in time to exert a profound influence upon a great many people. Its sequel begins in the next chapter.

For the time being, it is enough to point out that this rescue, utterly inexplicable by any stretch of the imagination, being quite beyond the powers of any known agency, whether of land, sea or air—this rescue showed no particular amount of intellect behind the unknown Thing that performed it. A child's mentality, given the physical power, could have done the stunt.

As for the second incident—the placing of that fifteen-ton "nugget" on the deck of the *"Cristobel,"* off the coast of Chile, in 1922—a similar deduction might be made. A mature mind need not have been behind that. In fact, one might say that the stunt was the work of a boy, who would naturally have a passion for privacy, buried treasure and the like.

But the affair in Egypt, in 1924, when the head of the ancient Sphinx was broken from its place and transferred to the top of the pyramid—that is not so easy to analyze. There is, of course, something childish about it; but there is also something decidedly *pat* in that stunt. It fitted the case astonishingly well. Was it not like some schoolboy's prank; does it not remind one of the ridiculous but clever things that sophomores in high schools are forever doing?

The fourth episode, when the bank was stolen from Hamburg under such extraordinary circumstances, bears out this theory. It shows, of course, more maturity of thought, and, as in the preceding case, it certainly was pat. One is irresistibly reminded of high school seniors and their dignified, but distressing escapades.

Thus these four seem to indicate a progressive relationship, as though their unknown perpetrator were steadily developing during the years that passed.

Moreover, the stunts themselves show a certain progressiveness in the matter of mere size. Each miracle is correspondingly more difficult, more terrific in dimensions, more incomprehensible in the light of ordinary knowledge. In fact, it was the stealing of the bank which led to the series to be called "The Colossal Mysteries."

But the fifth event leaves the investigator wondering whether this "progressivism" theory is worth much. Certainly the rescue of the *Mammoth III,* and its puzzling transposition from a spot in mid-Pacific to an inland resting-place, two thousand miles away—overnight!—this challenges the mind to the utmost, to even comprehend the vastness of the Thing whose powers were thus made manifest.

Finally, when the incident of the Chinese Wall, in 1930, and its absolutely incomprehensible annihilation between the setting and the rising of the sun, is considered calmly and in the light of the perfectly indisputable evidence—for where is the wall today?—when this staggering miracle is weighed in the scales against the products of reason, it seems to overbalance all that man can offer. Apparently it is beyond explanation. How can any theory possibly account for a display of energy so terrific, so nearly instantaneous, and so intelligently calculated to get net results? What becomes of the notion that these mysteries are due merely to progressive development on the part of the powers controlled by their unknown author?

Still, astounding though the facts may be, and unsatisfying though the "progressivism" theory may seem, no other theory fits the facts so well. One cannot conceive of any human agency developing such powers as are indicated by such results. And yet, one is equally unable to conceive of any other than a human agency behind them. The works are Brobdingnagian—yet *human.*

All of which leaves us free to consider the events of 1933, when everything came to a climax, and when the world was treated to something even more astounding than the six Colossal Mysteries.

Nineteen-thirty-three! What a year that was!

CHAPTER VIII

Ambition and the Man

THE magnificent residence of Daly Fosburgh, in Casawaya, has recently been purchased by the state, and from now on the estate will be a public monument. The reason for this will soon be perfectly obvious.

Even back in 1933 the mansion was the chief pride of the town. It belonged to the most important citizen of that exclusive little town of important citizens, the home of wealthy Californians who were desirous of getting away from Burlingame and other places once considered "high-toned." But the common people had begun to invade these towns; so they had to be abandoned, just as the game of golf had to be abandoned by the elite as soon as ordinary folk took it up. But the year 1933 saw Casawaya ranked even above San Diego.

The mansion of Daly Fosburgh, on the evening of April 30, was the scene of a very extraordinary conference. Three people faced each other in one of the drawing rooms; and such was the tenseness of their attitudes, neither noticed the lateness of the hour—it was long past midnight—nor any other fact than the topic which gripped their attention.

The younger was a girl of perhaps twenty-one, slender, piquant, even elegant, despite her conventional black-and-white costume, which proclaimed that she was one of the many maids employed in the house. Had she been attired in the fashion of the day's *bon ton,* one would have admired her without reserve for her daintiness, her clear, unspoiled gaze, and the intelligent resolution in the set of her exquisite mouth and chin.

She contrasted sharply with the young fellow at her side. He was big, and his complexion as slightly blond as hers was a trifle dark. His good looks lay less in his eyes than in the remarkable regularity of his rather large features. A six-footer in perfect condition, he seemed about twenty-two. He and the girl resembled one another only in the attitude and expression of high resolution, which appeared to be directed against the third person in the room.

This was a man, nearly sixty years of age, and bearing upon him all the marks of aristocracy. From his tall, slender figure to the way he fingered an unlighted cigar, his looks and manner proclaimed the out-and-out patrician. There was no mistaking the high forehead, the proudly arched eye-brows and the delicately modeled white moustache and imperial. Had he been dressed in any other garb than the conventional evening dress, he would still have been distinguished.

"You do not seem to understand," he was saying, his tones as distant and cultivated as one would expect. "I am not questioning this young woman's probity, my

son; I am merely forbidding you to have anything further to do with her."

"Pardon me, dad, but I do understand!" rejoined the young fellow. "I understand that you expect me to forget all that I have just told you, and, in a word, discard Florence from my mind as though she had never entered it.

"But the thing is quite out of the question. What I have been trying to tell you, all along, is that my regard for her is just as high, just as noble—as your regard for my mother!"

"What!" in a shocked voice, as though blasphemy had been uttered.

"Just that, dad! This affair isn't what you think it, at all. Florence and I—"

"Nonsense!" The aristocrat had regained his poise. "There can be no such thing as a desirable union in this case! No one would ever believe that an affair between a gentleman of your breeding, and this poor child"—

"Child!" exclaimed the girl. She drew herself up to her full sixty-two inches. "I am old enough to be held legally accountable for my actions! And Bert is right when he says that nothing out of the way has occurred!"

THE older man simply ignored her. "Such cases have been numerous enough, Bertram. And they have inevitably ended in disaster for all concerned. At present, your set absolutely will not tolerate even the suggestion of the idea. You must drop it."

"Must?" The young man seemed to be having a little trouble with his temper. "That is a poor choice of a word, dad!"

"It is not my word, alone, but that of a thousand or more families which constitute the most cultivated element of this country." The patrician now held the situation firmly in hand, and realized it, and was at ease. "Let me remind you of your position in society, Bertram.

"You are descended from a long line of the finest people who ever lived. Your money—my money—was not created in any vulgar fashion; it was not secured by speculation during the Great War. It was got together by sound, legitimate investment over a period of many generations.

"None of your ancestors has ever held himself inferior to the highest ranks of England. If we chose, we could have a title of our own, even now. Instead, for diplomatic reasons, we prefer to let our caste be manifest in other ways.

"Your station in the world is at the top, Bertram. The world was built, as I have told you many times, primarily for the benefit of such as you and me. Those who are so unfortunate as to be less well-born, are entitled to no consideration whatever at your hands; and when you talk of marrying one of the servants in your own household, you are merely absurd, Bertram; merely absurd."

Bert Fosburgh seemed to have been expecting something like this. "You could say nothing else, dad. I know you well enough for that.

"But it is only in your opinion, that this marriage is undesirable. I happen to entertain a different notion!"

As before, Daly Fosburgh carefully avoided so much as looking at the girl. Now, however, he spoke in a peculiarly impersonal tone, such as he reserved for his servants, meanwhile keeping his eyes intent upon the task of lighting his cigar. "For the sake of argument, we will assume, my child, that you think you love my son sincerely; that your affection is as noble as you claim it to be. We will take all that for granted, if you insist.

"But you forget that in the nature of the case, my child, you are quite incapable of appealing to the higher side of Bertram's character. Appraising all your assets at your own valuation, you are still, you must admit, far short indeed of the kind of a girl that you would honestly want him to marry.

"Is this not so?"

"It is not!" flashed the girl. She thrust an arm through her lover's. "Perhaps I haven't been educated in art and music, but at least I've been taught the things that really count!

"I feel absolutely sure, Mr. Fosburgh, that I can make Bert happy!"

The aristocrat nodded. "For about a day and a half," sardonically.

The girl started to make a sharp retort, then, with a sudden effort, she recollected herself and kept silent. Bert saw, and instantly exclaimed:

"Did you notice that, dad? She can hold her temper! And that's just the kind of a girl she is all the way through—restrained, controlled and dignified!

"I'd be proud, dad, to marry her! It isn't a question of disputing your judgment; neither do I disregard all that you have said about society's claims upon me.

"It's simply this: Do I love her? Well enough to give her my name? And is she—Florence herself, not her station in life—is Florence 'worthy', as you say? Well, sir, my judgment says that she is! And my judgment will have to stand above all else!"

Daly Fosburgh let his cigar die out. He sat down, and in silence studied the tips of his faultlessly manicured fingers. When he was finally ready to speak, however, there was no sign of whatever may have passed through his mind.

"Bertram, my boy, you are stubborn. I suppose you come by it honestly; all the Fosburghs have had wills of their own. I find fault only with your judgment.

"Now, my boy, I am so thoroughly convinced of this, that I am going to prevent you from acting as you wish. You are not to marry this child. You are going to remain single until a wife is found for you among the people who——"

"Not going to marry Florence?"

"No. If you will not listen to reason, you at least will pay attention to something more effectual."

THE boy gave an easy laugh. "I have the law on my side, dad. You can't prevent me from doing as I please. If I can't marry with your consent, why, then, I'll marry without it!"

"You are mistaken," imperturbably. "Doubtless you are thinking that, having come of age and therefore nominally into possession of your uncle's legacy, you are now independent of me, financially?"

"Quite independent, dad!"

"That is an error." The cigar was lighted again. "I shall contest your uncle's will, and see to it that you are cut off without a cent."

Again the boy laughed, but this time uneasily. "The court will have something to say about that."

"Yes. Everything. As it happens, the judge who will pass upon the case is a personal friend of mine. A word from me, and the matter is settled, my boy."

"I'll appeal the case!" with sudden heat.

"It will do you no good!" also showing a touch of temper. Mr. Fosburgh hesitated a moment, then: "And I may as well tell you something now, rather than wait until later, Bertram, that will save you the trouble of telling me that you are prepared to leave me, rather than accept my dictation.

"But before I tell you, this child must leave the room!"

For a moment there was a clash of wills. Florence's eyes flashed forth what she had schooled her tongue not to say. But Bert himself gently urged:

"Better do what he says, Flo. See you afterwards."

The girl left. Immediately, Daly Fosburgh resumed,

exactly as though the butler had opened a window in order to drive out a fly. He said:

"My boy, you do not know your father." At this, Bert looked up in some slight anxiety. Was—confession coming? "You doubtless consider me to be little more than a capitalist, a dabbler in politics and a connoisseur of rare books.

"In reality, I have as high ambitions as any man who ever lived! I have had these ambitions ever since you were born. And one of these ambitions, my boy, is to see you rise higher than anyone else in America!"

"Well?" after a breathless pause.

"For years I have worked and planned, always entirely under cover, towards this end. My financial operations have extended much further than any of my contemporaries ever suspected. And it so happens that your foolish affair with this nobody of a Florence Neil—is that the right name?—your affair came just in time to see my ambitions realized!"

"Go on!"

"A few days ago I should have hesitated to confide in you. Today, it is well that you should know what is about to happen; it will make it easier for you to appreciate why I expect certain things of you.

"Bertram," leaning forward, and sinking his voice to a whisper—"Bertram, your father is—tonight!—the secret dictator of the United States! I am its money lord!

"And you—you are to become its emperor!"

CHAPTER IX

The Coming of the Nth Man

THE foregoing took place about midnight of April 30. At dawn the very next morning, May Day of 1933, the Nth Man first set foot upon the soil of North America; and today the nation observes the date as a general holiday, of as great significance as the Fourth of July itself.

The Nth Man reached San Francisco at exactly six o'clock. A great many people claim the honor of being first to see him. In all likelihood, the number of these people will increase with each generation, until a time may come when several million children shall be told that "your great-grandpa saw him before anybody else did." However that may be, San Francisco gets the distinction.

The first official news of the newcomer was telephoned by a patrolman whose beat was on the heights north of Sutro Baths. This patrolman's name was Sullivan.

"All quiet," was his report, "but there's a big man standing out in th' Golden Gate. Whot shall I do wit' him?"

"A big *what?* Standing *where?*"

"A big man, sor, standin' in th' Golden Gate." The Irishman was evidently on the point of exploding with excitement, but he was determined that his captain should not guess it. "Whot shall I do wit' him?"

"For God's sake! What a hell of a joke! Go back to your beat, and quit your foolery!"

"Beg pardon, sor," insisted Sullivan. "'Tis no joke. There's a huge giant of a fella jist where I'm tellin' you he is. He come out av th' sea, about five minutes ago, an' he's been a-standin' there iver since!"

And thus, in the matter-of-fact words of a policeman, the world was apprised of the most surprising event in all history, ancient or modern. The Nth Man had come!

The city awoke. Mostly the news spread by word of mouth; for the soldiers at the Presidio, as well as numerous fishermen and others whose duties took them to the neighborhood of the Gate in the early morning, had lost no time in telling all who would listen. And long before any newspaper could put an extra on sale, the population of the city was pouring over the hills towards the mouth of the bay.

Oakland, which by that time had outstripped San Francisco and had become the first city of the west, was slower in getting the news, but just as quick to act upon it. Every available cross-bay craft was pressed into service, the Goat Island Bridge being not half commodious enough to accommodate those who had no planes. And by half-past six, the greatest marvel on the face of the globe was fairly surrounded by sightseers.

The Nth Man hardly moved from his position for the space of the first hour. He seemed to be waiting for something. And presently, when a large helicopter arose from the grounds of the university in Berkeley, and made its way over towards the Gate, the visitor's purpose in waiting became clear.

The helicopter contained most of the faculty of the college. They comprised the most advanced minds of the west, and the world would believe what they said. And well indeed might the world wish to be assured.

"Gentlemen," said the dean of the college, leaning over the forward rail of the airship and giving the Nth Man another scrutiny; "gentlemen, I am very glad indeed to have you with me on this occasion. Otherwise, I should think I had taken leave of my senses."

And then he fell silent. So did the rest of the faculty. And in stupefied wonder they gazed upon what stood before them.

Standing exactly in the middle of the channel, his left foot near the Sausalito shore and his right leg looming within fifty yards of Fort Point, stood the vast figure of the Nth Man. From time to time he moved his prodigious head, so as take in his surroundings the better; otherwise, he strongly reminded one of the ancient Colossus of Rhodes, the statue that stood astride the entrance to the harbor of that name. But instead of standing a mere ninety feet in height, this wonder of the twentieth century stood inconceivably higher, and—he was alive!

It was difficult for the eye to appraise him at his full value. He was too immense. He was so enormously large, that it was a problem to find any other large objects, with which to compare him.

Was he taller than the Spreckles Building? Yes; much taller! But—how much? The eye could not answer.

It was the people in the helicopter, the professors, whose minds were somewhat more flexible than those of the millions of gaping sightseers round about, that finally saw the newcomer in his proper perspective. Comparison again; it was the only way to appreciate him. And the dean himself must be given the credit for being the first to approximate the staggering truth.

"Good God!" he gasped. His face whitened, and he shook like a leaf, as the stunning fact was hurtled into his consciousness. "Men—the giant—he's taller than Tamalpais!"

IT was true. The Nth Man overtopped the highest mountain in sight!

Of course, the world today knows the precise figures. There he stood, towering into a sky which, for once in the history of San Francisco, was entirely free of fog. His whole figure, except for that part of his feet that was covered by the waters of the bay, was clear to the vision of all those millions. And they overlooked not one detail.

Especially did they note the curious thing which he carried in his hands. At first no one believed what they saw; then, finally, it dawned upon them that this whole affair was real, and that the giant was actually holding an ordinary battleship in his arms. Not till several hours later was it known that this ship was the

Pan-Asiatic super-dreadnaught, *"Siamese Twin II,"* a vessel of some 80,000 tons, armed with the usual twenty-five inch guns of the day. As for the story of its crew, taken by surprise, driven from the vessel and put ashore on the Farallones—that would make a whole book in itself, and should not halt the progress of this little account.

And so, perhaps, one hour was too short a time in which to appreciate the marvel before the eyes of the west. The thing could only be understood piece meal. It was too vast to comprehend as a single entity. It was the professors in the helicopters who, hovering within a half mile of the giant, decided among themselves to appraise the newcomer in just that fashion; bit by bit, they could reduce him to understandable terms.

The dean elected to examine the giant's eyes. He found them to be slightly small, in proportion to the rest of his features; and while the balls were bluish white, the pupils seemed pure black. The dean was reminded of a poetic expression—"twin lakes of fire"—and was startled to see a wonderful likeness. Those prodigious pupils, sparkling and flashing with some hidden emotion as the giant glanced this way and that, were certainly no smaller than small lakes.

But they were devoid of brows or lashes. And the lids, instead of resembling those of humans, were like two tremendous shields of some hard, brown material. When the giant winked, which he did as often and as naturally as any of those who eyed him, these shields dropped down in front of the pupils and, of course, flashed back up again into a recess in the eye socket. It was odd, but not disagreeable to watch. The lids were merely hard, not soft; otherwise they differed from the rule only in size.

Meanwhile other professors were examining his ears. These were found to be shaped like most people's, measuring about as much, from top to lobe, as the height of an ordinary thirty-story building. They, too, seemed made of that hard, dark-brown substance.

The men who were examining the giant's nose afterwards wrote a treatise in which "a combination of Roman and aquiline, with a projection of fifty yards in front of the upper lip" was the way they summed the matter up. The outer covering was the same as the rest of the face, that unknown, rigid material of chocolate hue.

The mouth was said, by the men delegated to pass upon it, to be the most agreeable feature of the face. Of course, humans prefer that the lips be flexible and curving, whereas the Nth Man's were rigid and straight. Whenever he opened his mouth to yawn—he seemed nervously excited—his lower jaw merely dropped away from the upper, there being some sort of a sliding joint in the hard substance at the corners of his mouth. Nevertheless, the net expression of his lips was good-humored, curious though that may seem. He was not grim, at all.

The teeth were large, white and in perfect condition. He looked competent to chew an ordinary oak tree with greater ease than most people chew celery. And the interior of his mouth, as revealed by those nervous yawns, was red and clean, just like a mammoth edition of any human's.

Those of the professors who were elected to examine his facial expression, however, were obliged to admit that they were baffled. They agreed upon only three points: The colossus was intelligent, he was not ill-natured, and he was resolute.

His eyes certainly were those of a well-informed, self-controlled person, despite their terriffic size and lack of regulation setting. His mouth, as already said, was anything but fearsome. But his chin, a square, straight-cut promontory of unmistakable strength, told instantly of his will-power.

"His neck," certain professors later reported, "was about two hundred yards in diameter, possessed of a large 'Adam's Apple,' and remarkable chiefly for its covering. This was an extension of the rigid material which coated his face; but on the neck this material was formed in three rings, or layers, which overlapped like the plates of a coat of mail. But we are sure that the material was not metal. It was either bone, or leather of unexampled hardness."

The people who were examining his mighty torso, and his terrific arms and massive legs, came to the same conclusion about the substance which coated these parts. Except for the flattened steel hull of some ship or other, which he wore in lieu of a breech-cloth, the giant was unprotected by any other than this many-jointed coat of scale-like, bony, brown-colored armor. Its true nature will be disclosed in due course.

Thus, perhaps, one gets some idea of the Nth Man. The battleship in his hands made him somewhat more comprehensible even though it did remind one of a toy in the grasp of a child. For the ship was nearly a thousand feet long, and the giant carried it with as much ease as most men would carry a gun.

Again, his fingers might make him more understandable to those who cannot grasp the other details. His hands were perfectly formed, the fingers nicely proportioned. On the backs they were protected by that unknown material; inside, the "skin" seemed much like elephant's hide. His nails were dark, closely trimmed, and ranged in extent from one to two acres.

"The colossus is devoid of hair," was another of the bits of description that have been handed down. "At least, none was observed by reliable witnesses. This armor of his seemed to have taken the place of hair."

And so there you have the picture of that stupendous man—for, all in all, he was merely a man on an unprecedented scale, nothing else—towering into the sky, overlooking the bay and the hordes of curious people who were fighting to see him. Conceive of his head, surrounded by planes, like that of an ordinary man in a flock of pigeons. His mighty form rose to that incredible height, with not one deformity to break the symmetry of his figure. Straddling—the Golden Gate!

His sheer immensity was overpowering. Small wonder that so few have attempted to describe him; the normal vocabulary had never been strained as it was on that day. Words must necessarily fail to convey an idea which, in itself, transcends mere language. Language is based upon experience, and no experience had ever before equalled this. The Nth Man, even as he towered above the rest of man's works, towered also above man's power to describe.

One little thing, more than all else, will help to bring the Nth Man within the comprehension of ordinary mortals. Like most evidence of great value, it is indirect; it is a statement of what the giant did, not of what he was.

IT occurred just at the end of the hour. At exactly seven o'clock, when the sensation-proof clock in the tower of the university campanile was sounding the time, the giant moved from where he stood. And two million hearts all but stopped as the hitherto motionless colossus lifted first his right foot, then his left, and started forward.

The airplanes scattered like frightened birds. A dreadful sound arose—the mingled screams and shouts of that suddenly terrified mob. But, before panic could spread, the giant turned around and took four tremendous strides through the water towards the ocean.

There he paused, looking down. The crowd watched in stupid, anxious wonder, as the giant keenly inspected the waters about his feet. Then, he stooped and care-

fully placed the battleship upright in the sea; and from underneath one plate of his armor he plucked a brown object which he shook to the breeze.

It was a fisherman's net, or rather, several of the largest size, fastened together. The giant handled it gingerly, as though fearful of breaking it. And when he had got the fabric shaken out to his satisfaction, so that it hung from his fingers like a square of brown lace, he gathered the four ends together, two into each hand, and bent down and dragged the net through the sea.

Next moment he stood upright, with his net full of fish. A squirming, flashing, silvery mass, there could not have been less than fifty tons in that single haul. And the giant, holding the catch above his head, opened his lips and poured the net's contents into his mouth.

He chewed, noisily, for about three seconds. Then, one huge swallow; and a quantity of fish, sufficient to feed a village for a week, was gone down his gullet.

He repeated the operation. Again and again the net was emptied, while the people stood and gaped in helpless wonder. What if the Nth Man should fancy a mouthful of *them!*

But nine nets-full seemed to satisfy him. He put the net back into its place, and stooped to retrieve the ship, which had floated off a half mile or so. At the same instant the giant saw something a little further out to sea.

It was the dorsal fin of a shark. Like a flash the giant dove, as a football player might tackle a runner, and the ground shook with the impact as transmitted through the water. At the same time, the splash sounded with such amazing loudness that it was heard as far south as Casawaya. Also, the action created waves of such height that every seal was washed off the rocks at the Cliff House.

The Nth Man drew himself to his feet, dripping but triumphant. He had the shark by the tail. He held it high in air, darting and twisting in his grasp; it was like a minnow in the grasp of a boy. And the giant laughed.

"HA, HA, HA!!!!"

A terrific bellowing of mirth, which thundered from up there in the sky; a sound which took almost ten seconds to reach the people on the ground. And the echo lasted over sixty seconds.

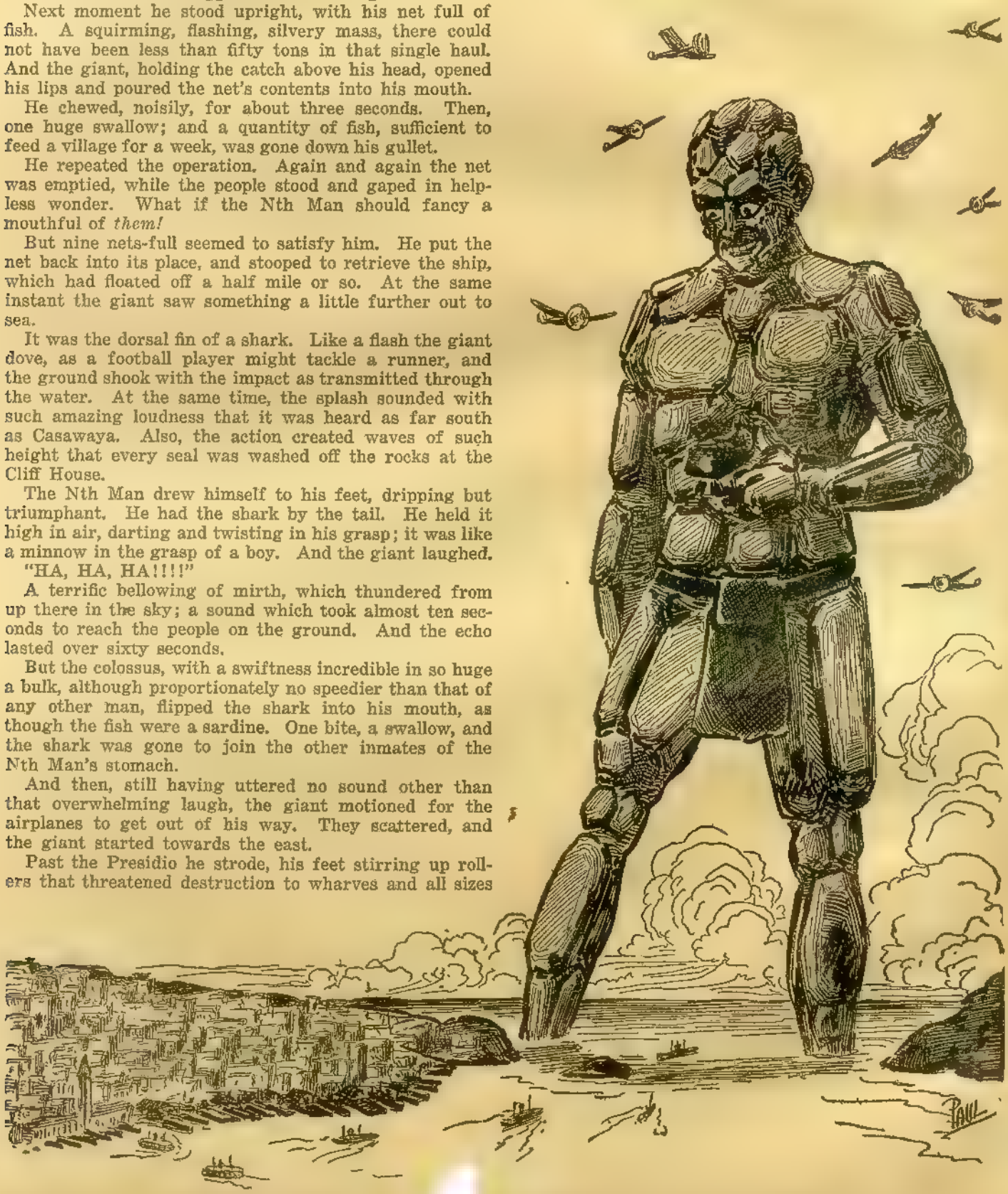
But the colossus, with a swiftness incredible in so huge a bulk, although proportionately no speedier than that of any other man, flipped the shark into his mouth, as though the fish were a sardine. One bite, a swallow, and the shark was gone to join the other inmates of the Nth Man's stomach.

And then, still having uttered no sound other than that overwhelming laugh, the giant motioned for the airplanes to get out of his way. They scattered, and the giant started towards the east.

Past the Presidio he strode, his feet stirring up rollers that threatened destruction to wharves and all sizes of craft. He noticed this, and moved more slowly and carefully. Presently he stood opposite Oakland, and halted, staring down upon the city.

Next second he stooped; and resting the tips of two fingers in the space opposite the city hall, the tips of two others on a hill in Piedmont Park, the giant leaned far over and thrust his face towards Lake Merritt.

There were a number of small boats around the edge of the lake. These, the giant brushed ashore with his



Standing exactly in the middle of the channel, his left foot [illegible] the Sausalito shore and his right leg looming within fifty yards of Fort Point, stood the vast figure of the Nth man . . . . this wom[illegible] of the twentieth century stood incomparably high . . . . and he was alive.

chin. Then he sank his mouth into the middle of the lake, and drank it up.

And next moment began his extraordinary march across the continent of North America.

CHAPTER X

Gulliver II

UP San Francisco Bay he strode, coolly stepping over the Goat Island Bridge and bearing northward, so as to pass Berkeley and Richmond. At every step his unbelievable legs covered over half a mile; but the giant walked slowly, considering his proportionate height. His gait was hindered, not only by the ten fathoms of water in which he stepped, but by sheer air resistance.

As he passed the campanile at the university, the Nth Man, almost without halting, leaned over and playfully twitted the uppermost tip of the beautiful structure. The monument shuddered throughout its length; every bell was thrown from its place. The giant drew back, as though surprised and regretful of the mischief he had done; then went on.

When he reached Richmond, however, his spirits seemed to have fully returned. Bending over, he scooped a double-handful of water—perhaps half a million gallons—up into the air, as one playful swimmer might "shove" water at another. And Richmond was treated to an unexpected cloudburst, which left its streets astonished, but clean.

On marched the giant, past various small towns along that part of the bay and not pausing until he reached Port Costa. There, two huge train-ferries were at work, carrying freight from Benicia to Port Costa. The Nth Man, after an instant's survey of what was being done, reached down and gently picked up both boats; after which he set them down, each in the slip towards which it had been heading. By so doing, he cut five minutes from their time across, and incidentally made a mess of their schedules.

Still keeping to the water, which by now had narrowed considerably, the giant stepped past Suisan Bay and Collinsville, his immense height enabling him to easily distinguish the Sacramento from the San Joaquin river. He bore steadily upstream until almost to Isleton, where the river channel became too narrow for his enormous feet. Then he took to the land.

Wherever he threw his weight, there resulted a certain characteristic depression in the earth. Sometimes it was only a few feet deep, where the soil happened to be packed hard; in other places his weight pressed the ground to a depth of ten yards. The shape of these astounding pits is fortunately preserved intact in many places, so that we know the Nth Man's feet were above five hundred yards long and nearly two hundred across the ball, with toes and other details quite in proportion to those of an ordinary adult's. But his toe-nails were exceptionally long, and curved.

Perhaps it was this experience of sinking with each step, that made the colossus walk so slowly. Again, it should be remembered that, as soon as he took to land, he immediately had to watch every move he made, in order to avoid doing damage. This took time; otherwise, considering that he was over fifteen hundred times the height of a six-footer, he should have walked that much faster, which would have made his speed six thousand miles per hour, instead of the even one thousand to which he actually attained.

But he took the most painstaking care with every step, frequently stopping short to inspect his surroundings the better, that he might make no blunders. His eyes, located about a mile and two-thirds from the surface, were able to cover a great deal of territory; and he had picked a clear day. On the whole, he did not lose as much time as one would suppose, in his search for the safest route.

Ignoring the state capital altogether, the Nth Man headed straight for Placerville. He kept away from the roads, usually planting his weight where the results would work the least harm to crops. It was better to harm vegetation than to interfere with traffic, as a pit in a road would have done. Inevitably, however, a good deal of damage was done to cultivation; a matter which the giant seemed to carry in mind, for just after reaching the foothills he did a characteristic thing:

He stopped and built a dam. The location was at the foot of a small canyon, fed by a creek near Placerville. Engineers had despaired of building a dam in that spot, for it had seemed to be too expensive a job. But the Nth Man simply broke the tip off a nearby peak, shoved it down into the narrowest part of the canyon, and walked on. Today, that dam conserves millions of dollars' worth of water, which is used by the valley that bears the giant's footprints.

Presently he reached Lake Tahoe. He stopped there a full half minute, squatting in order to see the place the better. Apparently he enjoyed the view as much as any other tourist; and, like many of them, he decided he needed a drink of the famous waters. So he bent down and sucked up a few gallons.

"AH!!!" he observed, with monstrous satisfaction.

But his drinking had caused a disturbance on the lake, such as threatened to swamp some of the steamers along its shores. Not letting go of his own pet, the *"Siamese Twin II,"* the great man from the sea carefully steadied the steamers with a touch or two, until the waves subsided.

He had been on the march less than fifteen minutes, and already had reached the eastern border of California. Now, he set foot upon Nevada soil.

First circling past Carson, so as to cast an interested glance or two at Virginia City—apparently its history was just as romantically interesting to him as to anybody else—the giant bore off towards Carson Lake and from there straight on towards the fast-rising sun. He must have known that Austin was an absolutely dead town, devoid of a single soul, now that its mines were finally exhausted, for he planted one foot precisely in the center of its deserted shacks. But he avoided Eureka and the many other well-settled localities along his route, and hurried on towards the next state.

Fifteen minutes after leaving Tahoe, he was in Utah. He seemed eager to reach the Great Salt Lake; for he almost ran while crossing the desert west of it, and shortly stood in the middle of the water. Thereupon, seeming to take great delight in the action, he lay down and rolled over and over in the lake; and when he got up he went on with visibly renewed vigor.

Bearing now to the south-east, the Nth Man picked his way as gingerly as ever past Salt Lake City, through the Blacktail country and thence along the Bad Land Cliffs. At the Green River canyon he paused, gazing southward as though longing to follow its course; but he pushed on towards Colorado, reaching the border line at 8:47, Mountain time.

HIS twenty-one minutes in that state was marked by no particular happening, except that, while crossing the backbone of the continent near Leadville, the giant was seen to stoop quite low. Evidently he did this in order to keep his head out of the rarefied upper regions of the air. This problem of an air supply must also have [illegible]ted to keep his speed below what it might have be[illegible]

[illegible]aching Kansas, the giant made good time. The

air was not as transparent as that through which he had just come, or else he would have proceeded faster. As it was, he passed Kansas City at 10:20, Central time, just a third of an hour after entering the Sunflower State.

And so the giant marched. It wasn't practicable for him to pay for such damage as he did; it wasn't even possible to avoid imperiling human life. But there were very few lives lost that morning on his account; for, swift as were his motions, the action of the wireless was swifter.

Presently the giant encountered the first of the Federal forces. This consisted of a fleet of two hundred battleplanes, rushed north from Oklahoma to intercept him. The machines were provided with the most up-to-date equipment, and armed with orders from the president himself. This fleet met the giant as he was striding over Missouri, near Chillicothe.

The commander of the fleet boldly drove his plane close to the Nth Man's right ear. And with the aid of a megaphone, the commander was able to make himself heard.

"In the name of the government of the United States of North America," he shouted, authoritatively, "I command you to halt!"

The giant heard and turned his head. But he kept on marching. The commander shouted again.

"I command you to halt! Don't you understand?"

Whereupon the Nth Man smiled broadly and nodded, as though it were all a huge joke. And he kept right on.

The commander's orders did not state what he should do in case the giant refused to halt. The orders merely advised him to "use his own discretion." So the aviator gave the giant another inspection.

That tremendous battleship, snuggling in the grasp of the man from the sea, probably decided the matter for the airman; this, and the fact that the very air was in a turmoil, so violently was it agitated by the movements of this modern Gulliver. It would be hard to do good target work, with the air so unsteady.

So the commander decided that he had best follow the giant. When he looked back, however, he saw that his plane was the only one of the fleet that had kept up with that thousand-mile-an-hour gait. His had been drawn along, it seemed, by some sort of a vortex that surrounded the Nth Man's head. Once out of that swirl, and the commander's five-mile-a-minute machine was hopelessly left behind.

At the Mississippi, the giant stopped for a sip of the muddy but historic waters. Veering sharply to the north at this point, he crossed Illinois without incident, reaching Chicago—or rather, its environs—at 10:45. There he stepped into Lake Michigan with unmistakable relief.

"WHEE!!" he shouted, boyishly, as he splashed in his Gargantuan fashion through the cold waters of the lake. "WHEE!!"

Hurrying past Kalamazoo, the giant soon reached Detroit, where he paused and stared in apparent astonishment at the vast expanse of factories, where, all passenger traffic having now gone into the air, the product was already simplified to trucks and planes. But the Nth Man had no time to spare.

Leaving just two footprints in the soil of Ontario, formerly a province of a separate commonwealth but now one of the States of the North American Union, the giant plunged in his business-like fashion into the waters of Lake Erie. The vast amount of traffic, however, impeded his progress almost as much as on land; so that it was 12:08, Eastern time, when the man from the sea emerged dripping from the lake and started across New York State.

At every step he met Federal aircraft, some only with ordnance, some only with authority. One and all demanded that he stop, and one and all, after a second or two in the giant's proximity, were forced to fall back, unable to keep up with his terrific pace. As yet, no demonstration was made against him.

But the further he went, and the longer he remained upon land, the larger the crowds grew. Planes, rushing up for a fleeting glimpse of him, flew over mobs as dense as the land could hold. The giant, however, made a practice of walking where the ground was least crowded; hence, most people saw him at a considerable distance. Those who were nearer, were those who had to flee as he approached.

Everywhere, it must be remembered, his tread shook the earth as it had never been shaken before. His progress across the continent was marked by one continuous earthquake. Even when he strode in deep water, the earth trembled steadily.

And every second that he was in motion, the air was reverberating with the hurricane produced by his passage. Hurricane, however, is a mild term for a disturbance that would make a cyclone seem like a gentle breeze. Such was the howling of that gale, and the shrieking of the wind, it drowned out even the muffled thuds of the giant's steps. The world had never heard its like before.

Presently the man from the sea stood within a few miles of Albany, at the bank of the Hudson. He stared southward for a few seconds; and the word shot through the air to thousands of vessels along the river:

"The giant is coming! Clear the way!"

IMMEDIATELY the march was resumed. Past the numerous villages along the "American Rhine," paying scant attention even to the Palisades, much less the works of man, the giant proceeded in his careful, thorough fashion down towards New York. He reached the city about 12:35; but, to the intense disappointment of the Gothamites he did not pause, save to snip the flagstaff from the new two-hundred-story Sanger building. He used this flagstaff, curious though it may seem, as a toothpick.

Taking care to avoid placing his weight on any of the tunnels that lay under the bottom of the river, the Nth Man waded on past the Battery. At the Statue of Liberty he halted, long enough to take the torch out of the hand of the figure, and to replace it with a small rapid-fire gun, carefully abstracted from the battleship in his arms. The substitution gave the statue a very different appearance.

As though the action were a signal, Fort Hamilton opened fire on him. The shot passed above his head, and was meant to bring him to a summary halt. He did pause, as though astonished, but most certainly did not halt. On he went; and next moment came the second shot.

This struck him full in the stomach, a tremendous three-ton projectile which burst upon impact. Not a tremor was seen to pass through the goliath's body. It was just as though an egg had smashed against a barn door. The hard, brown armor was absolutely undamaged.

For the next twenty minutes, as the giant covered the remaining distance between New York and Washington, he was subjected to a continuous bombardment. From battleships, forts and aircraft, thousands of tons of shells, bombs and armor-piercing shot were hurled against that two-mile-high, human tower. And not once did he so much as falter.

For, although the most powerful weapons in the whole world had been turned against that chocolate mail, not one projectile was able to get through. Here and there, where high explosive had detonated just right, a dent

or a slight pit was to be seen in the stuff. Some of the plates were made ragged on the edges. That was all.

As for the giant's eyes—the aircraft directed their efforts against these. If his sight could be destroyed, he would be made helpless. Each machine that could get near him, if only for a second, discharged every available piece towards those oddly hooded orbs.

But the giant merely closed his enormous, bone-hard lids over his pupils, and waded on. Afterwards it was learned that these lids had been artificially pierced, in their exact centers, with tiny holes. Too small for any projectile to get through, these apertures allowed the giant to pick his way just as readily as ever. And he still took the utmost care with every step, while cannons roared from every side, and the steel rattled from his armor like hail from a roof.

Could nothing stop him? It seemed impossible. Certainly no ordinary warfare could get results against a body whose weight, as the world now knows the figures, ran up to a third of a billion tons.

But how about gas-attacks? They were tried, with equal lack of success. If a bomb exploded very near the giant's face, he merely waved a hand, as though some evil-smelling insect were bothering him, whereupon the air was sweet once more to his nostrils, clear once more to his gaze. A single drop that oozed from beneath one of those shielding lids, showed that the tear-gas had had some trifling effect.

And thus it came to pass that, when the Nth Man stood in the Potomac opposite the capital of the nation, the bombardment came to a sudden end. The city would be endangered by continuing the attack. The gun-fire ceased; the aircraft drew away from the now stationary colossus; and comparative quiet settled over the spot.

Down on the lawn in front of the White House the president of the country stood, an insect of a figure, surrounded by equally insect-like guards. In the streets and on top of buildings, stood the greatest crowd of people that the world has ever seen. In the air, close to a million machines circled and hovered. A hush of expectancy, and then—

Somewhere a bell sounded the hour. It was just one o'clock Washington time. The giant had crossed the continent in exactly three elapsed hours, having left the Pacific Coast at seven o'clock by Berkeley time, or ten o'clock on the Atlantic. It was incredible—but there he stood. And the waiting mob asked itself just this:

"What is he going to do?"

And so they watched and waited. The giant stood motionless. Perhaps he was tired from his three-hour walk; perhaps he was forming a plan. At any rate he made no move or sound for the space of over a minute.

Then, without the slightest warning, he stooped and grasped Washington Monument. A gentle jerk, and the famous obelisk was uprooted; whereupon the Nth Man most carefully planted it upright on the other side of the river, in Arlington Cemetery.

As though satisfied with this display of his powers, the giant straightened up. And he looked right down at the White House lawn as, for the first time speaking an intelligible word, Gulliver II thundered forth:

"WELL!! NOW—IT'S MY TURN!!!"

CHAPTER XI

The Nth Man Speaks

A SHUDDER of apprehension ran through the crowd, as the bellowing tones of the monster crashed down from the skies. A shudder, not without reason. The giant could speak English!

This made him, curiously enough, a far more terrible object. If only this barbarous apparition from the sea were ignorant, stupid, unthinking, he might be trapped in some manner or other. But—he was intelligent!

So reasoned most of the millions who heard. To others, however, the fact meant just the other thing. They viewed the colossus with relief. For, it seemed to them, if this towering human mountain were a rational, well-informed being, there was less to fear from him. He could be reasoned with.

However, the monster waited about a minute before making any sort of a move. Presumably he knew that everyone was watching his mouth, and so he purposely waited until his exclamation travelled down to those on the ground. Thus they might be the more impressed with his size. For, as soon as the people at the White House showed that they had heard, the giant knelt; and by placing his knees where the monument had been and resting his finger-tips near the executive offices, he was able to bring his tremendous face to within a hundred yards of the president's. All with the utmost care, and in respectful silence.

The president found his voice. Like any man with nerve enough to assume such an office, the gentleman then president of North America was not to be outfaced by even this prodigious thing.

"Who are you?" he demanded, nervously, of the giant. "What is the meaning of this outrage? Explain yourself, at once!"

The monster smiled. It was an amused, tolerant, self-assured smile, which had the effect of further disconcerting those who feared his intelligence, and of further relieving those who welcomed it. He made no reply.

"You must explain yourself!" repeated the president. The sound of his own voice braced him considerably; he was a noted orator, and quick to adjust himself to his hearers. "The mere fact that you disobeyed the order to halt, and were not harmed by cannon, is no proof that you can work your own free will with us!

"If you have any case to make for yourself, state it at once! You shall be dealt with fairly! But—you shall be dealt with; rest assured of that!"

A brave speech, under such circumstances. Those who heard knew that it deserved applause, and several were courageous enough to start a vigorous handclapping.

Whereupon the giant, smiling broadly now, leaned back on his haunches and joined in. The blasting thunderclaps of his huge palms effectually drowned out all other sound, just as the roar of cannon drowns out musketry.

Down came the monster to his kneeling position again. He was quite at ease. Apparently he realized that, so long as he kept in proximity to the president, he himself was immune from attack of any kind. And he waited patiently until comparative silence was secured, before making any response. Then he said:

"GLAD TO MEET YOU, MR. PRESIDENT!" He spoke in an extremely gentle voice, compared with his previous tones. It was all but a whisper; what ordinary folks call, "sotto voce." Yet the sound carried that hundred yards between him and the president, and filled the poor gentleman's ears with thunder. A little louder, and his hearing would have been destroyed.

"AS FOR MY NAME, AND THE EXPLANATION OF HOW I CAME TO BE WHAT I AM, THERE IS NO TIME TO GO INTO THAT NOW." He plucked something from beneath a joint in his armor. It looked like a tiny affair, there in his huge fingers, but when laid on the lawn it appeared to be an immense metal chest, bound round with seaweed. "THAT CONTAINS MY HISTORY. LET IT SPEAK FOR ME LATER.

"JUST NOW, MR. PRESIDENT, I HAVE COME TO MAKE A DEMAND. IF YOU LIKE, YOU MAY CALL IT AN ULTIMATUM!"

The president gasped. So it was true! This monstrous thing had come to force his will upon America! And,

so far as they could see, he was practically certain to have his own way. How could they prevent him?

But the president's nerve, outwardly, at least, was not at all shaken. His voice rang as courageously as ever, when he replied:

"This government, my huge friend, will never submit to dictation from such as you!

"This demand of yours, whatever it may be, will have to be something self-evident, something that can be granted without the slightest objection from America, or else you may consider it refused before it is stated! And I may as well say, first as last, that I cannot conceive of any such demand!"

As the president finished this speech, he advanced towards that gigantic face; and with his final words, he raised his fist and shook it, defiantly, indignantly. For sheer stout-heartedness, the president's action probably stands without equal in the annals of man.

The giant seemed to appreciate this. He moved his head ever so slightly, in an unmistakable bow of respect. Then he reached out one hand, as though to motion the president back to his former position. It was a gentle move, but the president misunderstood; and, his nerve suddenly gave way; he turned and bolted impotently to the steps of the White House. Not till then did he recollect that the dignity of a nation depended upon him. He halted, wheeled, and drew himself once more into an attitude as defiant as he could make it. And the giant spoke again:

"WHEN YOU HAVE EXAMINED MY HISTORY, MR. PRESIDENT, YOU WILL READILY UNDERSTAND WHY I AM MAKING THIS DEMAND. YOU WILL ALSO UNDERSTAND WHY, IF YOU REFUSE IT, I SHALL HAVE TO TAKE MEASURES TO FORCE YOU TO GRANT IT. RIGHT NOW, I HAD BETTER STATE MY ULTIMATUM AS BRIEFLY AS POSSIBLE:

"NOMINALLY, THE UNITED STATES IS A REPUBLIC. SHE IS SUPPOSED TO BE RULED BY HER CITIZENS, EACH HAVING AN EQUAL VOICE IN HER AFFAIRS.

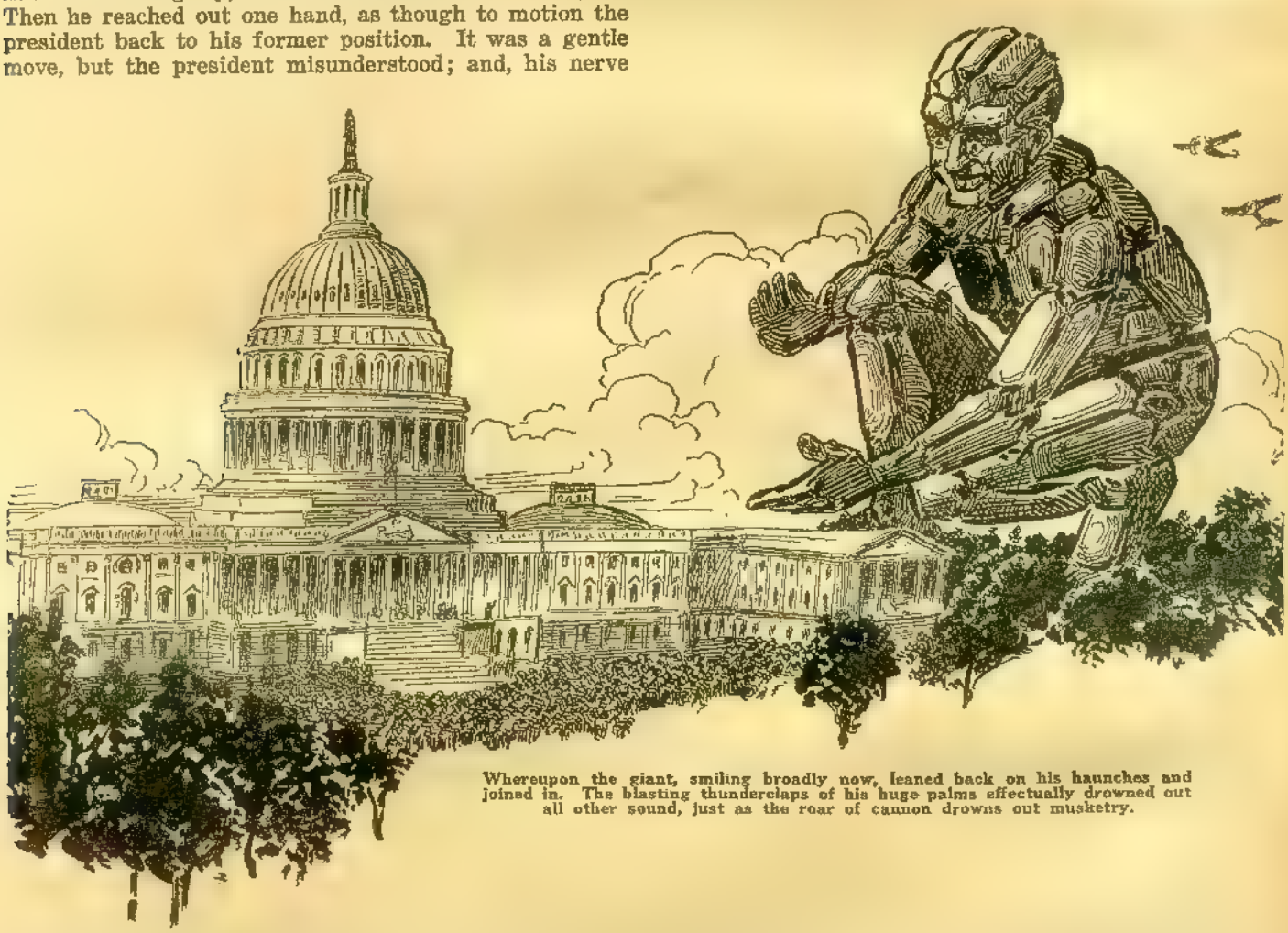
"PRACTICALLY, HOWEVER, AMERICA IS RULED BY ONE MAN. AND THAT MAN'S NAME I AM PREPARED TO STATE!"

"That is not true!" shouted the president, instantly. "This is a government of, for and by the people!"

"GOOD FOR YOU, MR. PRESIDENT. I EXPECTED YOU TO MAKE SUCH REPLY. THE MAN WHO FINANCED YOUR ELECTION WOULD BE SURPRISED IF YOU SAID ANYTHING ELSE.

"BUT THE SIMPLE TRUTH IS THAT YOU, AND EVERYONE ELSE IN THIS COUNTRY, ARE SUBJECT TO THE DICTATION OF A SINGLE MAN!"

"That is false!" shouted the president, louder than before. This time he spoke mainly for the benefit of the surrounding crowds. "Each American is a free-agent, in every sense of——"



Whereupon the giant, smiling broadly now, leaned back on his haunches and joined in. The blasting thunderclaps of his huge palms effectually drowned out all other sound, just as the roar of cannon drowns out musketry.

"NONSENSE," remarked the giant, his voice effectually throttling that of the president; "NOT SENSE—NONSENSE! IT HAS BEEN REPEATED ONCE TOO OFTEN. I SHALL NOT ALLOW YOU TO HOODWINK THESE PEOPLE ANY FURTHER, MR. PRESIDENT. AND IT IS HIGH TIME THAT THEY KNEW THE FACTS.

"BUT I CANNOT TRUST YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, TO TELL THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY OUGHT TO KNOW. I AM NOT ASKING FOR A PROMISE FROM YOU. I TRUST ONLY THE POWER OF SENSATION, OF SENSATION SUCH AS I AM NOW CREATING, TO AWAKEN AMERICA TO ITS PERIL.

"I AM NOW ALMOST READY TO STATE MY DEMANDS."

THE monster paused, and waited. He fixed his great eyes upon the president; and immediately, as though the man could not help himself, the chief executive took a step forward and said, in a wonderfully gentle voice:

"Well? What is this demand? Let us have it, my friend!"

"I DEMAND THIS: THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT SHALL PASS LAWS OF SUCH A NATURE THAT THEY WILL REFORM THE COUNTRY'S FINANCIAL SYSTEM; THE PURPOSE OF THESE LAWS BEING, TO FOREVER PUT AN END TO THE DICTATION OF ANY ONE MAN!"

The president looked around, helpless. This was too much of a load for even his shoulders. And yet, he must make some sort of a reply.

"Such a proposal as this," he finally retorted, "cannot be settled off-hand. It would have to go through the usual channels, before it could become law. And there is not the slightest doubt but that the people will refuse——"

"THE PEOPLE WILL HAVE NOTHING WHATEVER TO DO WITH IT," coolly, from that enormous mouth. "MR. PRESIDENT, YOU WILL IMMEDIATELY PROCEED TO DRAFT SUCH A SET OF LAWS, AND RUSH THEM THROUGH CONGRESS IN THE USUAL MANNER WHEN YOU WANT QUICK ACTION. ALSO, YOU WILL TAKE CARE TO MAKE THESE LAWS ABSOLUTELY CONSTITUTIONAL.

"MOREOVER, THEY MUST GO INTO EFFECT AT ONCE!"

This was a poser, and no mistake. However——

"I see no reason," tartly, from the president, "why I should pay the slightest attention to your absurd demand. Not the slightest, my enormous friend!

"But, assuming that Congress should consider this proposition, suppose it refuses to pass such laws? Or, supposing they are passed, what if I refuse to enforce such laws on the grounds that they are unconstitutional or discriminating? What then, Mr. Giant?"

The colossus slowly lifted himself to an upright position. Had he moved at all quickly, he would have smashed innumerable planes that were hovering over his huge bulk. When he was finally upright again, he waved everybody aside while he moved back to his former location in the middle of the Potomac.

He opened his mouth and made reply. Then he turned on his heel, and strode seawards. Ten seconds later, these words rolled down from the heavens:

"YOU CAN DO AS YOU PLEASE ABOUT IT, MR. PRESIDENT. I AM GOING BACK TO THE SEA, AND SHALL NOT RETURN FOR SIX MONTHS. AT THE END OF THAT TIME I SHALL REAPPEAR.

"IN THE MEANWHILE, THESE FINANCIAL REFORM LAWS MUST GO INTO EFFECT. NO ONE MAN SHALL BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE COUNTRY AGAIN. I LEAVE IT UP TO YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, TO PASS AND PROPERLY ENFORCE THESE LAWS.

"BUT IF, WHEN I RETURN, I FIND THIS COUNTRY STILL DOMINATED BY DALY FOSBURGH—MR. PRESIDENT, I SHALL HAVE TO DECLARE WAR!!!"

CHAPTER XII

America Decides

THE giant was gone. By the time his final words reached the ground, his enormous form had disappeared beneath the waters of the ocean. Back to the sea he had gone, and the world breathed freely once more.

Who was he? Was he really a human being, like any other man on earth save in the matter of size and covering? Or was he, as others thought, simply a huge machine of some kind, manipulated by a hidden intelligence?

On the White House lawn still lay the great metal chest that he had left. He had said that it would "speak for him." The people eyed it eagerly.

But the president's wits were still intact. He pointed to the chest.

"Take that into the executive offices," he ordered, "and begin at once to decipher whatever you find. But, on no account shall you make your findings public, until I give the word!"

His secretaries hurried to obey. And, as will shortly become clear enough, there is small wonder that the extraordinary message in that chest was kept from the people for a long time. Only in the end was it feasible to make the truth known.

"There is only one question of any particular importance, just now," the president told America, in a speech made that night. "That is, the proposition which the giant has placed before us. What are we to do with it?"

That was the question! What was America to do with the startling proposal of the man from the sea?

Informal investigations, carried forward by indignant citizens who disregarded all injunctions, uncovered some highly disagreeable truths. The giant had been right! One man *was* in control! The rest of the country *was* dominated by Daly Fosburgh!

What to do about it? A determined band of liberals, their sense of liberty thoroughly aroused by these disclosures, energetically set to work to enlighten the masses. Their efforts were astonishingly successful. The president, through autocratic agencies, tried in several ways to provoke these workers to violence, but without results. Inside of two months, the membership of the Financial Reform League—committed to the giant's proposition—had grown to amazing size. Three months passed before it could even be counted, and by that time over fifty-five per cent. of the population was enrolled!

The government viewed this league in alarm. And when, despite all that could be legally done to prevent it, the League presented an absolutely unanswerable petition at the White house, the president could do no more than to ask twenty-four hours time.

He called his cabinet. He minced no words. Like himself, his advisers were all secret members of the Heavy Hand. And, on the morning of August first, the people of America were told just what to expect.

The news reached Casawaya about five in the morning. Before six o'clock, every person in the Daly Fosburgh establishment, from its aristocratic head down to the last footman, knew what the government had decided.

And so it came about that Florence Neil knew, almost as soon as Bert and his father, that the United States had decided to refuse the giant's proposition, to turn down the Financial Reform League. The girl immediately sought Bert.

"Bert! It means war! War — with that awful monster!"

Bert looked more or less indifferent. "To tell the truth, Flo, I'm not very much interested. I don't care which way it turns out; I'll have something to be thankful for, and something to regret."

"I don't understand," drawing him down beside her, on a settee. "I mean, I want you to tell me again, dear."

"That's all I can tell you now, sweetheart. If the giant wins out, then I can go right ahead and marry you. "And if he doesn't, then"—he suddenly drew her very close—"then I'll have to get what satisfaction I can from the situation into which my father intends to force me!"

She already understood that he could not divulge his father's secret plans to make him emperor. And she did not try to make him break his promise. She merely said:

"What did you say you could do, if—if the giant wins?"

"I can marry you!"

"Then"—tremulously—"I hope he wins, war or no war!"

And then, because she was a woman, and because she loved Bert very dearly, she turned unexpectedly and buried her head on his shoulder. While he, because he was the right sort, let her cry as much as she liked, and comforted her. It did them both good.

In the meantime, the government declared the country to be in a state of war, and appointed a censorship. By this device, the Financial Reform League was silenced. Its activities were officially condemned, its leaders thrown into prison, its propaganda destroyed as "seditious." All of which is very easy to get away with, when a country is at war.

The giant had said that he would reappear in six months. He had come on May Day; he was due to return on November first. There were just three months in which to get ready for him.

For one thing, the government tried to bring pressure upon various foreign countries, to aid in combating "this peril to civilization, this horrible monster from the sea." But, with one accord, each and every nation refused to give any help whatever to the one country that had failed to progress. She must fight the giant—alone!

All this while, the Nth Man had remained totally out of sight. He seemed to keep to the deep seas around South America, Africa and Australia. Enormous fleets of airplanes were kept constantly on the wing, day and night, with orders to report any sight of the monster. But he managed to evade them all. Not till later was it easy to understand how he did it.

The secretary of war was an exceptional politician. He had not waited for war to be declared, before going ahead with his plans; but, seeing that this was no time to listen to precedent, he concentrated on producing something new in warfare, something that could operate successfully against an opponent such as no secretary of war had ever before dealt with.

How best to fight the giant? Certainly not with an ordinary army of infantry, no matter how well equipped with machine-guns and flame-throwers. Such would have no effect against the man from the sea. Neither was it any use to consider the navy; ships could not operate against a Thing that could create enough waves to swamp every ship afloat. Similarly it seemed that aircraft—ordinarily considered the main fighting branch—was useless in dealing with a monster who could move faster than wings, and who could turn the air into a cyclone with a few waves of his arms.

As for electricity, or magnetic waves, the idea was not even mentioned. The giant's armor was obviously an insulator.

No; the only hope lay in artillery. Not in ordinary explosive shells, either; nor yet in gas bombs. The giant was too bulky to be concerned with any concoctions that might be hurled at him. All he needed to do was to agitate the air a bit, and thus relieve his eyes and nose of the most deadly gas.

What sort of projectiles would get results? Obviously, just one: the remaining possibility and nothing else. And the secretary of war, maintaining the utmost secrecy, rushed work along that line and no other.

As for men to wage this new kind of warfare, men who could operate the hastily designed apparatus which was to conquer the colossus—the government tried its best to secure them by the usual drafting method. The method failed, so far as the common people were concerned. The average American now fully realized that he would be a fool to fight Daly Fosburgh's battles. So, without any violence or disorder, each and every draftee who would not be a beneficiary to Daly Fosburgh's success, coolly and quietly marched straight to prison, a conscientious objector, rather than be forced into the ranks. No amount of official propaganda was able to inject patriotism into a people who saw that this patriotism would benefit only a single man, and his favorites. They were willing to fight for their country; they weren't willing to fight for Daly Fosburgh's privately owned nation.

So, in the end, mainly it was his friends and mercenaries who did the actual fighting. There was no one else to do it. And when all is said and done, the arrangement worked very well.

THE actual chief of staff was, of course, the great financier himself. But certain infirmities kept him from the field. He supervised operations while remaining quietly in his own home, surrounded by wireless.

As for his son, Bert—"My boy," said General Fosburgh, when Bert had come into the library in response to his father's request—"my boy, the time has come for the Fosburghs to show what they are made of. The world is waiting to see whether we are entitled to the respect we have always demanded. And you see for yourself"—displaying his handsome uniform—"that I have made my choice.

"Will you follow my lead, Bertram?"

There was an anxious appeal in the man's voice. For the moment he was not merely the man of ambition, with a longing to rule the world. He was a proud father, anxious to see his son make good.

Bert took a firm grip upon himself. He longed mightily to show his dad just how much he loved him. But this, as the general had said, was a time to show just what sort of stuff was in him.

"I'm going to disappoint you, dad," gazing steadily into his father's eyes. "As a Fosburgh, I consider it my duty to respond only to the highest impulses within me. By nature, I dearly love a scrap; I should like nothing better than a part in the fight. And I'm as proud as anybody.

"But I want none of this giant's blood on my hands. He is right! I'm in favor of the reform, dad.

"And while, rather than offend you, I shall do nothing at all to help the giant, at the same time I cannot fight him!"

Daly Fosburgh's thin lips twitched, ever so slightly. Otherwise he gave no sign. He merely said, in a low voice:

"I shall try—to appreciate your position from your viewpoint—Bertram. You may go."

And Bert went, and immediately told Florence. This time it was she who did the comforting. The next day, Bert claimed exemption as a C. O., and went to jail.

And, exactly six months after his first appearance, exactly as he had promised, Gulliver II came out of the sea again and stood for the second time on the soil of North America.

CHAPTER XIII

The One Day's War

THERE had been a great deal of speculation as to where the colossus would emerge from the sea. Would he come straight back to Washington? Or would he follow his former procedure, and make an overland march from west to east? If neither of these, then which, of the various other possible points of entry, would he choose?

"Puget Sound," many predicted. "He could work

more havoc there, before being molested, than at any other point."

Others considered that he might come up the St. Lawrence, and commence operations around the Great Lakes. Still others, remembering how unexpected all the monster's actions had been, insisted that the authorities keep a close eye on the Gulf of California. "He'll wade up the Grand Canyon, and reach the heart of the country before we know it."

But few believed that the giant would do what he actually did. It seemed as though he had used the least possible cunning, in entering at such a point. Surely the forces of the nation could be more readily concentrated upon the Mississippi Valley than anywhere else on the continent.

So there was surprise, followed by elation and relief, when Gulliver II was reported, at seven o'clock on the morning of November first, to have shown himself in the river opposite New Orleans. He would be able to do very little harm, before an end was put to him!

The population of the southern metropolis was, to the last soul, out of doors to gape at the monster and to see the beginning of his campaign. They noted that he seemed little changed. Some thought he looked a trifle larger; but this, of course, is a matter not open to discussion. Certainly there was no change in the details of his horn-armored, enormously large limbs and torso, no reduction in the awe-inspiring appearance of this apparently irresistible Goliath.

He stood only for a second or so, gazing down upon the city. Then he spoke a few words and, as he had done when last seen, he turned and marched upstream without waiting to see the effects of his remarks. Presently these words thundered down:

"I KNOW THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION. I HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE THAN TO DECLARE WAR. FROM NOW ON, IF I DO ANY DAMAGE, IT MUST BE BLAMED ENTIRELY ON THE ADMINISTRATION.

"I SHALL MARCH SLOWLY NORTHWARD. IF YOUR GOVERNMENT STILL WISHES TO RESORT TO FORCE, I SHALL HAVE TO REPLY IN KIND."

That was all he said at New Orleans. Its import was certainly clear, and decidedly disturbing. The monster seemed to feel that he would succeed. And there was no denying that the government had not thought to apologize in advance for whatever destruction might ensue; but the giant had thought.

Immediately, of course, the news of his arrival was flashed through the air to the various authorities. Without an instant's delay—for all was in readiness, and waiting—the engines of the new warfare were started on their errands of destruction, each manned by determined, desperate but thoroughly competent though hastily trained men. And the world had never before seen the like of that attack.

Moving inwards upon the Mississippi Valley, from all points of the compass, surged a fleet of three hundred "battle type" dirigibles. They flew from strategic points along both seaboards, from New Foundland to Tampa, from Acapulco to Sitka. Capable of two hundred miles per hour and sailing at full speed, they closed in steadily upon their moving target.

As for the giant, he continued his quiet saunter up the Mississippi, taking all his former care to avoid doing any damage. Upon reaching St. Louis, he paused and observed, with evident interest, the construction of the new bridge at that point. The piers had just been finished when the monster's first visit cut operations short, leaving the nine sections of the bridge all assembled but still on the banks, awaiting the time when the workmen would come back from on strike and shift the steel to the piers. All of which may have amused the giant; for the people of St. Louis heard him utter a chuckle, a deep, reverberating note that shook every window in town. Then, stepping carefully past the piers, he reached over and picked up the bridge sections; and after fumbling with them in the fashion of a child assembling a puzzle, he placed them carefully in position on the piers. Thereupon, having accomplished more in one minute than the builders could have done in a month, the giant moved quietly on.

COMING to the forks above Alton, he took the left hand branch without any hesitation, having evidently made up his mind on this point beforehand. On he waded, now in the bed of the Missouri, still taking great care to step over bridges, avoid all wharves and shipping, and to keep clear of almost all power lines. A few of these, however, he broke, seemingly having overlooked them and apparently being quite unconscious either of the strong, copper wires, or of the thrashing, sputtering menace of the heavily charged conductors.

In this manner he ran away, so to speak, from the dirigibles that were rushing from the east and south; but at the same time, he was going out to meet those that were coming from the west and north. And so it came about that when, after leaving the Missouri at Kansas City and proceeding up the Kansas past Topeka, the colossus finally stepped out of the water and strode for a few minutes northward, he stood at last not far from the geographical center of North America.

And it was there the dirigibles found him. Erect in the cornfields of Kansas, with Atkison on the east and Nebraska a few miles to the north, Gulliver II waited for nearly two hours for his attackers to gather. And meanwhile he made just one more statement:

"I WOULD RATHER HAVE PICKED A MORE BARREN SPOT, MY KANSAS FRIENDS, FOR THIS BATTLE; BUT I DECIDED THAT THE AFFAIR HAD BEST OCCUR UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES AS TO MAKE IT DECISIVE. YOUR GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CLAIM THAT IT WAS CAUGHT UNAWARES. IT CAN HAVE NO EXCUSE WHATEVER FOR ATTACKING ME AGAIN."

He raised his voice; and for the first time, humans realized what sounds this monster could make. Remember that he was more than fifteen hundred times the height of an ordinary man, and his vocal powers—since sound varies as the square root of the distance—his vocal powers were almost forty times as great as normal. That is his voice could carry forty times as far. And it did.

"WE SHALL NEED A SPACE ABOUT A HUNDRED MILES IN DIAMETER! CLEAR THE WAY AT ONCE!"

It was more of a hint than an order. The Kansans took it without question. And thus we owe it to the giant's thoughtfulness that there was no damage to noncombatants, and so little to civil property.

The dirigibles, swiftly tightening their circle about the colossus, were, of course, in constant communication with each other. The secretary of war himself was in command. And when a distance of fifty miles separated each ship from the central target, the signal was given to drop cargo.

Down on to the Kansas soil, each alighting squarely upright and all in position for operation, landed three hundred of the world's most terrific engines of war. Beside them, a moment later, landed their crews, running straight from their parachutes to their posts. So well was the thing arranged, and so carefully practiced, that within a single minute the giant was surrounded by the Cramm guns.

The day was clear. The sun was just past the zenith.

By shading his eyes, the colossus could take in every bit of that ominous circle, could see that he was in for it. But, far from showing the slightest apprehension, he merely opened his mouth and roared:

"DON'T WASTE TIME ASKING ME TO SURRENDER! I REFUSE TO DO SO! GO AHEAD WITH YOUR FIREWORKS!"

The secretary of war, on the bridge of the flagship, bit his lip in an effort to control himself. He turned abruptly to the radio man at his side.

"His blood be upon his own head! We can take no chances with him! It's murder—but it can't be helped! *Fire!*"

The operator rasped the word into the receiver. And next second the state of Kansas rocked throughout its length, as the earth received the recoil of that massed discharge.

Straight and true went every one of those three hundred projectiles—projectiles, made especially for the purpose, and totally different from anything that had ever been used before.

They were each ten feet in diameter, and weighed ninety tons apiece. They were not shot from ordinary cannon, but from electro-magnetic projectors, gigantic affairs, some five hundred feet in length and enormously powerful. Electricity, fed through a cable from each dirigible, hurled the projectiles from each of these tremendous machines.

Rushing at the rate of a mile a second, these ninety-ton missiles flew intact to a distance of twenty miles. Then, as the secretary of war himself pressed a certain button aboard the flagship, each projectile answered to wireless waves that discharged its mechanism. Whereupon, with a roar that was simultaneous in all the three hundred shells, these missiles became, in effect, aerial cannon; and out of their points shot secondary, armor-piercing shots, each a yard in diameter, and—absolutely unbreakable!

There could be but one result when such missiles struck. No conceivable target could withstand the enormous power of these shots. They had been known to penetrate fifteen feet of steel. The giant's armor was worthless.

But very few of the three hundred ever struck the mark. For, as though he knew in advance exactly how the attack would be made, the colossus waited expectantly until the instant the aerial cannon exploded. And then—he ran.

If his former movements had seemed wonderfully swift, they now seemed incredibly so. He dashed straight for the north, right in the face of a hurricane of steel; and in exactly forty steps—the marks are there today—in forty steps, inside of twenty seconds, the giant reached the edge of that awful circle.

He had been struck in three places. His leaping, of course, had rendered that careful aiming utterly valueless. Otherwise, he should have been riddled.

One of these chance shots pentrated his right leg, apparently without touching a bone; for it did not interfere with his subsequent actions. Another projectile inflicted a trifling wound in his side, carrying away several acres of his armor, which was buried in the earth when it fell and could not be recovered for some weeks.

But a third shot pierced his neck. It went through his windpipe, narrowly missing a jugular vein and lodging in a joint of his vertebrae. All this, of course, was not known until later.

YET, the Nth Man, beyond throwing a hand to his neck and uttering an exclamation of pain, did not allow this awful wound to stop him. A great river of blood flowed out, each drop falling like a scarlet cloudburst to the ground, staining the soil to a curious brown and rendering it wonderfully fertile, as afterwards proved. As for the giant, the wound had only the effect of making him mad.

He charged upon the nearest of the Cramms. It was already reloaded—such was the excellence of its system—but the piece was helpless. Its dirigible, tossed about like a cork in the cyclone created by the giant's leaping, had snapped the electric power cable. The piece was dead.

And the same was true of every other Cramm. Each of those three hundred dirigibles had become like a leaf or a feather, flitting wildly about the heavens, impotent in the grasp of that hurricane. Not a Cramm had any power to use. It was the one flaw in the plan.

The Nth Man may have known this, and he may not. Certainly his rage knew no bounds. Uttering only a stertorous, rattling gasp, as he struggled for breath through his shattered windpipe, he bent and seized the nearest of the Cramms.

Up he straightened. An instant, while he gloated over the huge machine that now resembled a mere trinket in his grasp, and then, putting forth all his prodigious strength, the giant threw the gun into Oklahoma.

Around the fatal circle dashed that raging monster, at every step scooping up one of the ill-fated guns. The second followed the first, far to the south. The third and fourth landed in Nebraska. And when, inside of four minutes, the last of the Cramms was hurled into the air, the monster's rage was not yet appeased.

He stood there for a moment or so, his chest heaving, looking around for other objects upon which to take revenge. His breath came and went through that horrible gap in his throat, creating a dreadful, wheezing rattle, so loud as to drown out every other sound.

For there were other sounds. From the stricken earth, shivering beneath the Nth Man's furious tread, there came the united shouts, screams and curses of the giant's enemies. It was, in the aggregate, more of a wail than a defiance; no one who heard will ever forget the cry that arose from that army of smashed and beaten humanity. It was a cry to heaven, from the depths of hell.

Only for a moment or two did the colossus take any rest. Then, again shading his eyes, he peered around in search of someone with authority. There was none to appeal to. The secretary of war, tangled in the wreckage of his flagship, was at that moment lying dead on the banks of the Platte. To whom should the giant state his demands?

He turned and strode directly east. And presently the terrified people of St. Louis were listening to the tones of his now ghastly voice:

"WHERE IS THE PRESIDENT? TELL HIM TO COME TO ME, AT ONCE!"

Ten seconds later the demand was flashed into space. At Washington, it evoked an immediate response. The response was made by an official who had just learned of the battle, and who was so badly frightened that he instinctively told the exact truth.

"The president has run away! He left secretly, last night, and is now supposed to be on the Pacific Coast!"

This message was received at St. Joseph, and given to a very brave man to deliver. This man was formerly a sea captain, and possessed of a powerful voice. And as soon as he appeared, megaphone in hand, on the roof of the Santa Fe building, the giant bent down to catch what he said.

He seemed to understand perfectly; for he made no comment. But, without a moment's delay, he turned and started westward.

This time he took no care at all with his feet. He placed them wherever they chanced to fall; fourteen people lost their lives, through failure to act quickly

enough upon receiving the wireless warning. But the giant stopped because of none of that.

He travelled more than twice as fast as he had gone six months previous. He made only three stops, and each of these was barely more than a pause. The first was at a reservoir near Denver. This, he emptied before his thirst was assuaged. The second was at Great Salt Lake, where he indulged in his second roll in the brine. The third pause was the longest, when he stopped at Lake Tahoe to drag nearly every fish from its water, getting barely enough to make a single mouthful.

One hour after leaving the battle-field, the Nth Man stood again in San Francisco Bay. And without any preamble he bellowed again:

"WHERE IS THE PRESIDENT?"

The mayor of San Francisco, as courageous a man as ever lived, but also as sensible, knew that the only safe course was to tell this living fort the absolute truth. A lie, and the giant might reduce the city to dust. The mayor decided to sacrifice the president to the greater cause—that of the city's existence.

"You will find the president," shouted this official, from a megaphone in the tower of the Spencer Building, "fifty miles south of here, on the coast, in a town called Casawaya! He is hiding with some relatives!"

As before, the giant with the damaged throat made no comment. He strode right through the Golden Gate, turned to the south, and swiftly skirted the shore until he reached Casawaya.

Opposite the town he came to a stop. This time there was no need to demand his quarry. The president, knowing by wireless of the search being made, in despair had resolved to make the most of it; why not, since the game was up anyhow? He showed himself on the lawn in the Plaza of the exclusive little city, and advanced with such boldness as he could muster, out into the open, in plain sight of the man from the sea.

The Nth Man saw him; and, as he had done six months before, he knelt and brought his face to within a hundred yards of the president's. The effort brought another gush of blood from the giant's neck; he coughed and half strangled, but managed somehow to whisper with more or less distinctness.

"YOU WERE A FOOL," he informed the president, "TO DECIDE TO MAKE WAR. YOU OUGHT TO HAVE KNOWN THAT I AM INVINCIBLE. ARE YOU SATISFIED, NOW?"

"I am satisfied," answered the president, heavily. "This country cannot conquer such a monster as you.

"There is nothing for me to do but to surrender. What are your—terms?"

The giant paused. He raised his head, and gazed slowly around at the crowd.

It was just noon, there on the Pacific Coast; for the giant had come west at such speed as to make up for the difference in time. He had travelled faster than the sun; he had left the Missouri at twelve-thirty. What, conceivably, would such a creature demand of mere humans?

"I AM GOING TO MAKE JUST ONE DEMAND," keeping one hand over his wound so that the escaping air might not confuse what he was saying.

"JUST ONE DEMAND, MR. PRESIDENT. I SHALL ASK FOR NO PROMISES. PROMISES CAN BE BROKEN. I SIMPLY MAKE THE DEMAND, AND STAND READY TO ENFORCE IT MYSELF, IF NEED BE.

"FIRST, I HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE PROPERTY OF DALY FOSBURGH, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS, IS HEREBY CONFISCATED. SECOND, I FURTHER DECLARE THAT THE DEMANDS OF THE FINANCIAL REFORM LEAGUE ARE, HENCEFORTH, THE LAW OF THE LAND!"

The law of the land! The proposed legislation—it meant the end, for all time, of one-man rule in America!

"AND," went on that remorseless, pain-racked voice, "TO PROVE THAT MY WORD IS LAW, I MAKE THIS DEMAND, AS A PERSONAL TRIBUTE:

"I DEMAND, THAT EVERY MAN WHO TOOK PART IN THE BATTLE THIS MORNING—SUCH OF THEM AS SURVIVE—SHALL COME FORWARD AND OFFER HIMSELF TO ME AS *FOOD!*"

CHAPTER XIV

The Turtle Man

"WHO WILL BE THE FIRST?"

The crowd stood in stunned silence. With the exception of a few, like General Fosburgh, who had remained on the coast to take care of that end of the work, most of the Casawayan male population was scattered over the field of battle. That is, the owners of the town's magnificent estates.

But their servants were, for the most part, on hand. The jails had not been able to hold them all. Out of the two thousand souls that heard the giant's final demand, scarcely one out of ten was in sympathy with the government—Daly Fosburgh's government, so to speak.

The general stood on his own veranda, not far from the spot where the giant's right hand crushed the earth. Some yards away from the financier, on the lawn, stood Bert, taking in the scene with a curious air of detachment. Although out of prison, he still maintained his original attitude towards the problem. However it ended, he must lose.

Florence, as soon as the giant spoke his ultimatum, as soon as she learned that her former master was doomed to a horrible death, disappeared. She had been standing at Bert's right; and when he first missed her she was nowhere to be seen.

"I think I saw her run that way," said the butler, pointing vaguely towards the sea, in reply to Bert's question. And no one else had noticed her.

Bert let the matter stand for a moment. He asked his father the only possible question.

"Have you made up your mind what you are going to do, sir?" Bert's inquiry might have related to a golf game, instead of to the most awful act that a man could be asked to perform. To nourish that giant! To feed that huge maw! But— "Are you going to show him what a Fosburgh is made of, dad?"

The aristocrat's eyes were heavy with agony. This was the question he was asking himself, as he gazed in horror upon the waiting face of the colossus, looming like a barrier between the house and the sea. What should he, Daly Fosburgh, do in such a case? Presumably, if the commander in chief himself were to volunteer, the giant's wrath might soon be appeased. Should he, a Fosburgh, be the first to sacrifice himself?

"I — don't know," he faltered. "I don't know, my boy."

The monster's voice crashed forth again. "IT IS UP TO YOU—EITHER YOU VOLUNTEER, YOU WHO FOUGHT ME, OR I SHALL RUN YOU DOWN!

"YOU HAVE JUST ONE MINUTE TO DECIDE, WHETHER YOU DIE LIKE MEN, OR—LIKE RATS!"

The seconds dragged by. No one could move, or make a sound. From moment to moment Bert glanced at his father; but the patrician, torn between pride and unselfishness, could not decide.

As for the rest of the people of his type, staring there at the giant, they were equally incapable of response. Not one had nerve enough to lead the way,

to start voluntarily the process of healing the giant's sense of outrage. It was the thing to do—but none could do it.

The giant raised his head, and looked around again. "YOUR LAST CHANCE," said he. "ONE SECOND MORE."

A breathless suspense; and then, with a sudden motion, the giant reached out and snatched the president with the fingers of his left hand. The man, helpless as a fly in that terrible grasp, seemed paralyzed with fear. The giant leaned back on his haunches and roared, above the cry of horror and dread that arose from all about him:

"RUN, YOU RATS—RUN! YOU CAN'T ESCAPE!"

The giant dropped the president from one hand into the other. Out flashed a huge, red tongue, and the next second would have been the president's last, but for a most extraordinary thing.

An expression of unutterable surprise swept over the giant's face. He sat stock still, holding his hands before him; and stared in pure astonishment at the tip of the smallest finger of his right hand.

There, crawling out of the crevice between that enormous finger-nail and the leathery skin, was the tiny figure of a woman. She grabbed the edge of the nail; and with a final effort, drew herself up on top of it, as a gnat might balance itself on her own finger-nail.

It was Florence Neil. Somehow, while the giant rested his right hand on the ground, she had contrived to crawl into that gaping crevice. And now she found herself a mile in the air, within hailing distance of the Nth Man's ear.

"You are making a great mistake!" she screamed. "Don't make food of these men! It's the worst possible thing you could do!"

Her voice, shrill as a whistle, carried down clearly to the earth. And her people stared, astounded, as the giant, even more astounded, made a stuttering reply:

"WELL! YOU HAVE A NERVE, LITTLE ONE! BUT—YOU HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING WORTH LISTENING TO!

"You just don't understand!" stormed Florence, finding it difficult to get enough air at that altitude, but desperation lending her extraordinary powers. "Let me tell you—what I mean!

"Most of the men—you propose to eat—are not to blame for their acts! They are—the victims of misrepresentation! You must not punish an army—for the sins of one man!"

"YOU MEAN, DALY FOSBURGH?" with a curious uneasiness.

"Yes!"

On his veranda, the general stood as though paralyzed. "He is there in plain sight—and it is he, alone, who—should suffer!

"At the same time, I happen to know—that *you* cannot eat *him!*"

What did she mean? A pause for breath, and she finished:

"He is my—employer! I have seen—your history, Mister Giant! And I know—you can't take vengeance upon—his body!

"Don't enforce your demand! Let things stand—as they are! With that man's billions confiscated—and the new law—America's future will be perfectly safe!"

It was the most remarkable speech in all history. The giant knew it. And he knew that the girl had matched sensation with sensation, had appealed to him in a way that none appreciated quite as well as he.

Down on the lawn in front of his home, Bert Fosburgh stared upwards in blank amazement. Behind him, his father stood, just as amazed, but with another and a totally different emotion surging within him, as well.

The giant quit staring at the girl. He looked off towards the south, hooding his eyes with those enormous shields as he thought and pondered over what Florence had said. Presently he turned his head, and looked at Florence once more.

Then, very carefully and with the utmost gentleness, he tilted his finger so that she could slide down, safely, into his other hand. He placed the president on the ground, and then held Florence up even with his own eyes.

"FOR YOU, LITTLE ONE; YES! I SHALL SPARE THESE COWARDS!

"AND AS FOR DALY FOSBURGH—LET HIM KEEP HIS LIFE, AND GIVE UP HIS FORTUNE. IT IS ENOUGH.

"YOU WIN, LITTLE ONE."

And he set her down, as though she were a hummingbird's egg in the hands of a child. She nearly fainted with the sudden change of air; but she looked up, and somehow managed to smile.

The giant smiled in return. "FOR YOU!" he cried, heartily. "YOU NERVY LITTLE MITE!"

And then, with a single warning glance at the crowd, the giant turned and strode west. In two minutes he was back in the sea.

INSIDE a week, the truth about the Nth Man was told. The data contained in the metal chest he had left, when compared with certain other information, rounded out his simple history in a manner that satisfied all curiosity. It amounted to this, no more:

Back in 1909, a young man named George Pendleton was attending the California Medical College in San Francisco. He was then within a few months of matriculating, and, being wholly without any independent income, he was still obliged to earn his living while keeping up his studies.

He earned it by driving a car, a fine limousine, which was one of eight possessed by the Parkhurst family. This car was used exclusively by Miss Dorothy, the youngest of three heiresses to the great wealth and enviable social position of Cynthia Parkhurst. And Pendleton was but one of a half dozen chauffeurs.

However, the pay was good enough to enable him, with care and an occasional professional "pick-up," to put him through school. He had his mornings free, by special arrangement attending only forenoon classes. Afternoons and evenings were at Miss Dorothy's disposal. He contrived to do his reading at odd moments.

But most certainly his pay was not enough to justify him in considering the notion of marriage, nor even of courtship. Such matters must wait, he had told himself, until he had his diploma and had returned to the little interior town where a practice, made up of a wide circle of friends, was almost eagerly awaiting him.

All he needed was patience, and for nearly eight years his supply had served. And meanwhile he drove that car with all the imperturbable qualities, combined with careful mechanics, that the most exacting mistress could expect. And Miss Dorothy was exacting. But Pendleton really was a clever driver.

There was just one flaw in his plans. He failed to take into account that Miss Dorothy, in the years that he had served her, had been steadily growing out of girlhood and into the full bloom of woman's estate. So gradually had the change come, Pendleton had not noticed it. Also, he failed to realize that, all in all, he and Miss Dorothy were necessarily in one another's company more often than either was in the company of any other person of the opposite sex.

Now, Dorothy's mother was an aristocrat of the aristocrats. Her servants—some thirty in number—were

merely so many necessary evils in her sight. She despised them all. And her daughters had the same creed.

That is, all save Dorothy. The younger of the Parkhurst family was proud enough, but she was also farsighted and imaginative. She could see that, in a year or less, her chauffeur was due to become a legally authorized physician, and as such entitled to the respect of society. And she was amazed to discover, upon thinking it over, that of all men who had ridden at her side in her own or any other car, none had a fraction of the manly, intelligent qualities of the fellow on the front seat.

But he seemed totally unaware of her good opinion. She did not know that he, who had first taken the job with some nervousness because of having "to protect a child," had grown to love her with all his heart. He himself did not realize it. She was, in his preoccupied mind, merely a beautiful child, when one day the inevitable happened.

Dorothy, having instructed Pendleton to drive her to the country, ordered him to stop at a certain spot on the La Honda road. She wished to pick some wildflowers, she said. And, since this was a comparatively informal occasion, there was no footman beside the chauffeur. Man and woman were alone.

Pendleton helped Dorothy over the fence, and stood, respectfully waiting, until she returned from the field on the hillside. It is doubtful if either of them had the slightest inkling of what was about to happen.

When Dorothy returned, her arms laden with flowers, she found it much harder to get over the fence, because it meant going downhill. There was just one thing to do; and Pendleton, climbing part way up the fence, locked his legs around a post and held out his arms, impersonally, to lift this "child" back down to the road.

The spot was deserted, except for these two. And next instant Dorothy Parkhurst, amazed but blissful, was crushed tight to the breast of George Pendleton, equally amazed and equally blissful.

They had a long and a wonderful talk, that afternoon. They agreed that their affair must be kept secret until Pendleton's graduation. After that, all should be well.

From that day forth Dorothy developed a sudden and devouring interest in nature. She bought a small library of volumes dealing with trees, flowers, birds and even minerals. Her social obligations suffered. But Pendleton didn't.

Winter passed, and spring came. Pendleton learned that he would have to take some extra work in order to matriculate. And during the summer Dorothy left San Francisco, going far up into Humboldt county, where she became a true woman of the outdoors. For many months the lovers did not see one another; but each wrote every day, without fail.

It was towards the end of October that Cynthia Parkhurst, having written letter upon letter without succeeding in arousing Dorothy to a sense of her social duties, decided that she must visit the girl in person. The visit was planned as a surprise. And it found Dorothy unprepared.

The mother could not be deceived. And, although Dorothy had hoped that she could keep her secret just a little longer—George's diploma was due within a week—she was obliged to confess to her mother. They had been secretly married. And the child was coming within a very few days.

Mrs. Parkhurst's pride was cut to the quick. Her Dorothy—and a mere chauffeur! In vain did Dorothy plead that Pendleton's degree, so soon to be achieved, would alter everything.

But even Dorothy did not know her mother's heart. Mrs. Parkhurst's pride was not a pride of intellect; hers was a pride of birth. There were innumerable M.D.'s; there could be only one Parkhurst family. To Dorothy's mother, a physician was merely a very highly paid and very finely trained servant; much above the average servitor, to be sure, but—a servant, as compared with a Parkhurst.

And the mother, disowning her daughter absolutely, left the place with the spoken vow that George Pendleton would pay heavily for his insolence.

THUS it happened that, on the very eve of his matriculation, George Pendleton was informed that "through charges of irregularity in your private life, which nullify your otherwise excellent ethical standing," he could not be given his diploma. Also, he would be barred from entering any other college. Mrs. Parkhurst had brought a certain very powerful influence to bear; an influence which will shortly be explained.

Pendleton knew there could be but one reason in the world for such an accusation. Obviously, Dorothy's secret was out. And he lost no time in rushing north as fast as the transportation methods of that day would allow.

Pendleton reached the little resort on the morning of November first. He rushed straight to the little cottage which Dorothy, in company with a former schoolmate, had been occupying. And When Pendleton knocked at the door, it was opened by the other girl.

"You're too late," she told him, in a hushed voice. He dashed inside. And there on her bed lay his wife, dying. She had taken poison, and she expired even as he raised her head.

An opened letter from Dorothy's mother told what had happened to Pendleton. So Dorothy had known. And a note in her own hand explained why she had taken her life.

She had expected, once she was the wife of Dr. Pendleton, to go back to her people with her pride intact. Now, all this was impossible. Moreover, she could not think of burdening George, whose career had been so utterly blasted on her account, with the care of one to whom life now meant so little.

Pendleton's training had schooled him, in a measure, to things like this. He recovered rather quickly. It was but a few minutes before he made a great resolve.

He sent Dorothy's companion in a hurried search for help. As good luck would have it, there were two trained nurses on their vacations at the resort. The most experienced of these was brought; and between her and Pendleton, who was a doctor in every sense except the legal one—between them, the Caesarean operation was performed, and the infant saved.

This child, a boy, was named Park Pendleton. The young doctor brought to bear every device of science and common sense, procuring the services of a foster mother, a Spanish woman who had recently been widowed. The baby progressed quite as well as his normally-born foster-brother.

With his prospects for a professional career completely gone, George Pendleton saw that he must either change his indentity or leave the country. In the end he did both; and, after having discounted for cash his share in a certain litigated estate, he took the Spanish woman, together with the two children and disappeared.

Some weeks later a certain Dr. Park, accompanied by his "wife" and two children, arrived in the Galapagos Islands. Perhaps it should be mentioned that these islands are a group of thirteen, located five or six hundred miles west of South America, directly under the equator. Although now internationalized, they at that time belonged to Equador. And there the Park "family" made its home.

Being a Californian, the doctor possessed more than a smattering of Spanish, and his Latin served to make him

a very welcome and adaptable addition to the Galapagan colonies. None but native doctors were there before him; small wonder, with a population of less than a thousand. But the standard of living was easy, prices low, and the doctor found the place to be ideal for the carrying out of his resolve.

Young Park Pendleton, to give him his true name, was brought up differently from any other infant since the world began. Until one year of age, it is true, he was fed on human milk. But when he reached that age he was weaned. And, while he began to eat and digest his food after the manner of other humans, at the same time certain elements of his nourishment were not assimilated in that fashion, but were injected, in condensed form, directly into his veins.

As for this peculiar food, it is first necessary to describe the thing for which the Galapagos Islands are most widely known. By this is meant the giant turtles, many of which are to be found in zoos throughout the world. These turtles, or rather, land-tortoises, are the largest known to science, growing to such immense size that they will support the weight of a full-grown man.

Moreover, these tortoises, whose food (before they became extinct on the Galapagos) was cacti and coarse grasses, are remarkable in other ways. For one thing, they live to an enormous age; some of those in captivity are known to be over three hundred years old.

Also, it appears that they grow as long as they live. They never seem to stop growing. Nevertheless, longevity and continuous growth are not all.

They possess incredible vitality. The experiments of Sr. Redi, an Italian surgeon, show that a Galapagos Island tortoise can live for months after the brain has been removed! Incredible though this may seem, yet there is a more startling fact: The triple heart of such a tortoise, twenty-three days after the head was cut off, continued to beat!

THESE experiments were known to Dr. Pendleton. And he was also aware of certain other discoveries, somewhat in advance of his time. For instance, he knew that the thyroid and parathyroid glands of animals are of vast importance in the matter of growth. The pituitary gland, located at the base of the brain, he also knew to be inseparably connected with the development of great size in animals.

Now, the one-year-old boy became a living experiment. Into his veins was injected the chemical elements which filled the vital glands of the Galapagos tortoise. People used to wonder why these turtles were killed off. Today, they may know.

For Park Pendleton became the Turtle Man. He differed from the unwieldy creatures in almost all respects; he was a finely developed, sturdy baby, with all the intellectual and physical possibilities of the highest type of human. But in one or two respects, he became a tortoise.

For one, he grew much larger than ordinary children. Also—because the glands were used as often as the child's system could stand the injection—whereas an ordinary turtle would live a lifetime on a single set of glands, the infant was presented with fresh secretions every few days. And consequently the boy grew with much greater speed than any turtle; faster, in fact, than any organism of the globe had ever grown before!

"Doctor," George Pendleton had once asked a professor, at the college;" doctor, is it true that the average infant is about seven-and-a-half pounds at birth?"

"Yes; that is the average."

"Is it also true that the average infant will triple its weight inside of a year?"

"Usually. They weigh around twenty-two, at twelve months."

"Well—I know it's a foolish question, doctor, but it may lead to something—why is it that a human infant doesn't *continue* to triple its weight *every* year?"

The professor looked astonished. Then, the novelty of the proposition was borne home to his imagination, and he contemplated the problem in all seriousness. In the end he said:

"There really is no good reason, Pendleton, why an infant shouldn't triple its weight the second year, the third, and each succeeding year. No good reason, generally speaking; but when you narrow it down to a *human* infant, then, of course, nature simply will not do it—without assistance."

And Pendleton never forgot. So, although the boy became a source of amazement and mystery to everyone else, the young doctor was not surprised at what happened.

The boy tripled in weight the first year, quite as the average infant does. That is, he weighed about twenty-two pounds when one year old. But, thanks to the treatment which his father administered, the lad likewise tripled his weight the second year. That made his weight, sixty-six pounds. And the third year his growth proceeded at the same rate, so that he was one hundred and ninety-eight at its close.

As he increased in weight, he also increased in width, thickness and height. He was normally proportioned; he was different only in relative size. At three, his Spanish foster-brother stood just two feet and nine inches; Park was already nearly twice as tall.

The treatment continued. Every available turtle in the islands was sacrificed. To get the glands, the doctor would have been hard-pressed for means, had he not discovered that the creatures yielded an excellent oil. Once a demand for this oil was developed, the natives slaughtered the tortoises right and left, delivering the desired organs to the doctor at the rate of a dozen for a *sucre*.

At four, Park Pendleton was nearing six hundred pounds. He was not far from a ton, at five, and over ten feet in height. Also, his skin had already begun to harden, like a turtle's.

Mentally, he was merely a child; that is, so far as his judgment went. But he possessed a prodigious memory, quite in keeping with his enormous skull.

Thus, at six years, we find that the boy must have weighed nearly three tons, so that, at seven, the figure would have been eight tons or more. Already his father had been obliged to lease the smallest of the islands for his exclusive use, keeping the curious away by drastic measures. In this way, the boy's phenomenal growth was kept from the rest of the world.

Park weighed three times as much, at eight, as he had at seven. This made him about twenty-four tons. At nine, his weight was seventy-two; at ten, two hundred and sixteen. He then stood almost exactly fifty feet tall; it was the year 1920—And this marks the date when the first of the "colossal Mysteries" occurred.

Early in that year the doctor had decided that he must have a reckoning with his boy. The lad realized, of course, that he wos totally different from any other. And now, for the first time, he was to be told the reason why.

"You owe your life," the father began, "to your mother, and to me. To me, however, you owe even more than to your mother, for you would never have seen this world had it not been for my skill." And he explained the Caesarean operation.

Then Pendleton told his boy of his tragic love affair. As clearly as he could, he explained Cynthia Parkhurst's tremendous pride, and how it had forced her to disown her own daughter.

"But that is not all," bitterly. "She prevented me

from getting my diploma! She did it, my boy, through the cowardly use of a peculiar influence.

"This influence would be hard for you to understand, at your age. I shall write out an explanation, for you to read when you are ten years older. It is enough to say that Cynthia Parkhurst prevailed upon Daly Fosburgh to bring pressure to bear on the regents of the college.

"This pressure was of a financial nature. And that one word, 'finance,' brings me to the point.

"My boy, Daly Fosburgh is a great menace to the United States. Today, he secretly controls enormous amounts of wealth. Year by year his control is being extended, until the time must come when he shall possess a controlling interest in every enterprise in the nation.

"It is inevitable. I have worked it out with calculus. When you are old enough, you shall trace every step of the calculation, and see that I am right. In time, the United States will be dominated by that one man—Daly Fosburgh,—who prevented me from graduating, and who was the indirect cause of your mother's death!"

The doctor paused for breath, before going on:

"Now, I am going to exact a promise from you, my boy." The father was standing on top of a high cliff, in order that he might gaze straight into his gigantic son's eyes, "a promise, based upon the fact that you would be dead, were it not for me, and upon the further fact that your mother would be alive today, were it not for Daly Fosburgh!

"I want you to promise me, that when you grow up—" conceive of it!—"when you reach the age of twenty-three, you shall take vengeance upon the man who caused the death of your mother, and who ruined your father's life!"

The boy was made solemn by it all. For the first time, his manliness was aroused. From that time forth he was no longer a boy, but a young man, in his viewpoint. And he gave his father the promise.

"I WILL promise you," he boomed across to Pendleton. "It shall be my purpose in life, to get even with Daly Fosburgh!

"What do you want me to do?"

And Pendleton went on to outline the plan. It was based upon the doctor's careful computations. By 1933—when the boy should reach the age of twenty-three—Daly Fosburgh must, inevitably, own a controlling interest in the United States. And it was obvious that he would then be, whether secretly or openly, the dictator of the land.

"Your work shall be, my boy, to put an end to the financial system which has permitted one man to gain such power! I shall write out complete instructions, for you to read later. By following them, you will destroy one-man rule in America!"

And thus the affair really began, thirteen years before the Nth Man first set foot on North America.

The doctor had already found it impossible to any longer use tortoise glands. Enough could not be had. Instead, he had analyzed the food of the creatures, discovered the chemical combination which produced the secretion, and finally traced these chemicals down into the volcanic soil of the islands themselves. Next, by setting up a smelting plant, the doctor was able to separate these elements from the rock, and afterwards duplicate the combinations he required.

So the growing boy was, at the age of ten, already depending directly upon minerals for his development. His diet had even then become reduced necessarily, to sea food almost without exception. And he was beginning to test his powers.

It was the summer of that year when he took his first long trip through the ocean, reaching Santa Cruz, far to the north, in time to effect the mysterious rescue of Florence Neil. Once or twice he was nearly discovered; but he learned to hold his breath even longer than a turtle, and so escaped by diving.

At eleven years, Park Pendleton weighed six hundred and forty-eight tons. At twelve, he weighed almost two thousand, and stood a hundred and thirty-three feet high. No wonder he had little difficulty in placing that huge boulder on the deck of the *Cristobel*, in 1922.

At thirteen he was about six thousand tons; at fourteen, he was seventeen thousand, and was not far from three hundred feet high. It was child's play for him to play that trick with the Sphinx; child's play, in more senses than one.

He weighed more than fifty thousand tons at fifteen. A year later he was over a hundred and fifty thousand, with a height of six hundred and thirty feet. Thus, his chief problem in removing the Zollverein Internationale bank was to avoid detection. The stunt itself was easy.*

At seventeen—when boys are at their most awkward age—Park weighed nearly five hundred thousand tons. This brought him up to a million and a half at eighteen, in 1928, with a height of fourteen hundred feet. It will be noted that his height did not triple; it varied, of course, according to the cube root of his weight, since he grew in width and depth at the same time he was lengthening.

But his size, in 1928, was such that he kept almost entirely to the water, finding relief from observation only on such barren lands as the Australian desert. Small wonder that he was interested in the *Mammoth III* and her precious cargo; and small wonder likewise, that he was able to perform this feat. Fourteen hundred feet tall! He carried the freighter gripped in one hand, high above his head, as he made his way through the sea.

By the time he was nineteen, he weighed four and a half million tons; by twenty, thirteen and a half million, with a height of three thousand feet. Fortunately, the sea swarmed with food. Otherwise, in that year 1930, he would never have been able to destroy the Chinese Wall overnight, and have thereby relieved the great nation from the thralldom of its past.

During the next three years, he continued to grow as before. At twenty-one he weighed four million; at twenty-two, a hundred and twenty million, with a length of sixty-four hundred feet. Finally, at twenty-three, when a boy ordinarily stops growing—at twenty-three, Park Pendleton also ceased to grow.

He then stood, as the world now knows, very nearly nine thousand, one hundred and ninety-eight feet high,—which is only a little less than two miles—with the inconceivable weight of three hundred and sixty million tons. He was coated all over with the bony armor of a tortoise. In all other respects, he was proportioned to a man of six feet and two hundred pounds.

As for his judgment, that was neither more nor less mature than most well educated young men of that age. But his memory was absolutely unthinkable.

For, in sober truth, the Nth Man knew *everything*. There was not one fact, of any consequence, which he did not actually know "by heart." His knowledge was that of every encyclopedia his father possessed, of every textbook, of every possible source of information. His father died; but the son possessed wireless apparatus of his own, set up on the barren snows of Antarctica. He kept constantly in touch with everything that happened. Not one important fact escaped him.

So that there is nothing so very remarkable about him, after all. Considering the circumstances, when all is said and done, Park Pendleton could have become nothing more nor less.

*As this goes to press, the government reports having received, from the Nth Man, the money which was contained in the stolen bank. It is not known what use will be made of this gold; but since the check-book system has practically abolished the use of specie, in all likelihood the metal will be used for dentistry, and the various mechanical arts.

He was omnipotent. Mankind could not prevail against him. It was impossible to plot against him in any way; for, with a mentality so prodigious, he naturally was able to perform psychic feats far beyond the powers of ordinary minds. He knew *everything*. He could read any mind on earth.

And today, out somewhere in the Pacific, the Nth Man still dwells, an omnipotent enemy of injustice, always "on tap," as it were, in case humanity fails to do what is right. Human nature *must* improve; human institutions *must* reform. The Turtle Man is there to see that they do.

He has never since come back to habitated lands. Almost every day someone reports having seen him, in one or the other of the seven seas. But his mere presence there is enough; it will never be necessary for him to return.

For America is, now and for all time, free from the danger of one-man rule. Things are still far from being perfect; there remains much to be done, before all men are made happy. But—dictatorship is forever at an end; thanks to Park Pendleton!

He will live at least three hundred years; that much is certain. After that—for he has exhausted his supply of chemicals—his fate is problematical. He will never have any progeny; his father denied him the possibility. But he may continue to exist as do such turtles as are in captivity, apparently never growing old, seemingly endowed with immortality. Or, he may possibly deplete the ocean of its fish. But this is unlikely; vast as he is, the ocean is vaster.

There are those who think that the Turtle Man is more of an allegory than a reality. They conceive of him as a promise of a condition yet to come, when the cause of Justice shall grow to such immense proportions that it shall become irresistible. The trifling power of the autocrats will become puny, by comparison. Such people see, in the Turtle Man, a promise of the time when injustice shall be done away with, when all men shall be masters of their own destinies, when the weak shall have been strengthened by the strong, and right is supreme.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that mankind will do well to please the Nth Man. Let progress continue as rapidly as possible, no matter whose pride suffers. Better let a few selfish ones complain, than provoke the Turtle Man to making another visit.

Let him who would bring back the old days, think twice!

* * *

IN the drawing room of the Daly Fosburgh mansion, an hour after the Nth Man disappeared, three people faced each other. Six months before, under decidedly different circumstances and surrounded by an entirely different atmosphere, the same three people had held a similar conference.

But, instead of a boy and a maid facing a haughty and adamantine father, this time it was father and son, side by side, expectantly watching the face of the girl. She stood off by herself. And it was she who was speaking:

"I was scared almost to death!" she declared, upon reaching the end of her account of her unprecedented adventure. "But I was more afraid of failing, than of falling!

"So—I just talked, I guess!"

"You certainly did talk!" agreed Bert, admiringly. There was a new respect, not far short of worship, in his gaze. "It was a wonderful thing to do, Flo!

"There's only one thing I couldn't understand. What did you mean, sweetheart, when you told the giant that —he *couldn't* eat father?"

Florence hesitated. It was Daly Fosburgh himself who answered:

"Because of something that most people have forgotten, my boy."

Both young people turned, at the curious change in the tones of his voice. The last few minutes had, in truth, amazingly altered the patrician's manner, his appearance, his whole outlook upon life. He owed his very existence to the sheer moral and physical courage of the girl who stood before him. And he was only too glad to forget that, by her own admission, she had been guilty of prying into the giant's history. "In fact, it is something I have never told you before.

"Bertram—you recall your two step-sisters, the Parkhurst girls? Their mother was divorced from me, just prior to my marriage to your mother.

"There was another daughter." A pause. "Dorothy, was her name. She died before you were born. And——

"She had one son, Park Pendleton. It was he who grew to be the giant! He spared me, because—I am his grandfather!"

For some moments the three stood silent, marveling at the curious ways of Fate. Presently the aristocrat spoke again.

"My child"—earnestly—"do you realize that you are the greatest heroine of all time? No man could possibly have done a braver thing!"

Florence dropped her eyes, too embarrassed to make an intelligible reply. But Bert was able to talk.

"I don't believe," positively, "that any man would have had the nobility to go through with it!"

"Oh"—almost wriggling, in her confusion—"let's talk about something else!"

"Very well." The older man slowly took a step towards her. "My—my dear," he seemed unable to speak——"my dear, can you forgive an—an old fool?"

The girl faced him, joyous and radiant, as she broke into a shaky little cry:

"You mean—you mean, Mr. Fosburgh,—you mean that you give your consent—to——"

"I crave *your* consent," he said, "to become the most honored member of this household."

From which it will appear that she had to kiss two people, before she was through.

THE END.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

we will start a new department for readers of the QUARTERLY, entitled "Your Viewpoint." This will be similar to the "Discussions Department" in AMAZING STORIES MONTHLY, except that in this department readers will vent their opinions only on stories that appear in the QUARTERLY. All of our readers have taken such a flattering interest in the stories appearing in these magazines, that we are certain they will want to know the impressions which they produce on others. When sending letters to this department, kindly address them Care of AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY.

The KING of the MONKEY MEN

By A. Hyatt Verrill

Author of "The Man Who Could Work Miracles," "Through the Crater's Rim," etc.

CHAPTER I

WALKER impatiently tossed aside the magazine he had been reading. "Why can't people write stories which are plausible?" he exclaimed in disgusted tones. "It's an insult to common sense and intelligence to print such rot—such things never happen."

"What things?" asked Blake. "What's the yarn that arouses your ire?"

Walker snorted. "About a crusty millionaire," he replied. "Gets shipwrecked and floats about in mid-ocean. At the psychological moment a yacht turns up and a sailor rescues the old Croesus. Yacht belongs to a society snob engaged to millionaire's daughter. Sailor turns out to be an impecunious rival who has shipped in disguise to protect the girl from the dissolute chap who owns the yacht. Of course the latter proves to be a crook and the rescued millionaire bestows daughter, blessing and all on the sailor. As I said before, such things don't happen in real life—no such coincidences."

While Walker was talking, Belmont had entered the room. He had returned a few days previously from South America, where he had been on some sort of a scientific expedition, but this was the first time he had joined us at the club.

"I can't agree with you, Walker," he remarked, as he dropped into a chair. "And no one has a right to say what is possible and what impossible," he added. "Moreover, even more remarkable coincidences than those in your story do happen. I've seen a lot of things which you would declare impossible if they were written as fiction. There was the case of Meredith, for example. Not one of you would credit the story if you read it in a magazine."

"We can judge better when we've heard it," said Thurston. "Go ahead; let's have the yarn."

"I heard the story on my trip up from South America," Belmont commenced, while we drew our chairs closer in anticipation of a good story. "We were lying off San Marcos," Belmont continued, "and I was leaning idly on the ship's rail, gazing at the little red-roofed town with its sea of unbroken green jungle behind it, and the snow-capped cordilleras in the far distance—an unknown, mysterious world, the haunt of strange beasts and stranger men. I turned just in time to see a man and woman step from the gangway-ladder to the deck. He was tall and lean, broad-shouldered and with a bronzed face, and he walked with the soft alert step of an Indian or an experienced bushman. At first glance I mistook him for a native. But he spoke to the officer at the rail in good English, and I saw that his eyes were of that unmistakable keen blue that spells Anglo-Saxon. But striking as was his appearance in this out-of-the-way spot, I gave him merely a passing glance, for my whole attention was riveted upon his companion. She was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. Rather less than medium height, she had a superb figure, and was obviously white, for her skin, although a soft golden-olive, was not lacking in pink as are those tainted with negro blood, nor did it have the dull coppery tint of the Indian strain; neither was it the sallow shade of the mestizo or of the Latin American. Her hair was lustrous bronze and her eyes were as blue as the Caribbean water along the shore. She was dressed in a plain gown of white linen; her feet were encased in canvas shoes, and she wore a broad Panama. But her walk! She seemed almost to float along, and she had the carriage of a queen.

"'Gee!' ejaculated Peters, the wireless operator who stood beside me. 'Did you ever see a female woman walk like that? Where the dickens do you suppose she dropped from, and what's she doing in this God-forsaken hole with that old Robinson Crusoe?'

"I shook my head. 'I've seen women walk like that before,' I said. 'But they were all Indians. That girl's no Indian and she doesn't look like any race of European I've ever met, either.'

"'I'll soon find out who they are,' declared Peters, as he hurried off to find the purser.

"Presently he returned, a disappointed expression on his face. 'He doesn't know any more than we do,' Peters announced, 'Says they've booked as 'Henry Meredith and Miss Meredith.' Thinks they're father and daughter and some sort of Creoles, although they're registered as Americans.'

"We saw nothing more of the two new passengers until dinner time, when they appeared at the captain's table. Without her hat, Miss Meredith was even more charming, and I saw Peters gazing at her with undisguised admiration.

"Meredith himself seemed a quiet, rather taciturn man, but with a wonderful knowledge on a great variety of subjects, and he conversed in perfect English with the captain and myself and in just as perfect Spanish with the native passengers and waiters.

"I really don't know what language I had expected Miss Meredith to speak, but her first words were in English, uttered slowly and a bit painstakingly, as though the language had been recently acquired, and yet with no trace of any foreign accent.

"When addressed by one of the Spanish Americans, she appeared puzzled, smiled, and, turning to Meredith, spoke in some odd, low-toned language utterly new to me. Instantly he replied in the same tongue, and then, turning to the others, translated her reply into Spanish, explain-

MR. A. HYATT VERRILL has written a particularly interesting story in this issue. Having just returned from an exploring trip in South America, where he has discovered a new race of people and having been on many other similar journeys, his story becomes especially interesting, because much of what he writes is based upon fact.

From an anthropological viewpoint, there is little fault to be found with this story, for we are not at all certain that there are no such creatures living somewhere on our globe.

This is one of the most absorbing stories we have read in a long time, and the editor warmly recommends it to you.

"At last we erected a pair of 'shears' of strong logs bound together with vines, which were raised above the logs at the very brink of the river. A crude sheave, made by slinging a roller of wood in two loops of liana rope, served as a pulley, and by passing a stout liana over this, and by the gigantic ape-like men hauling on it, one end of the largest log was raised high in air . . . . So delighted were the savages when they saw this seemingly impossible feat accomplished, that they almost ruined everything by releasing their holds on the lines in order to dance and shout with triumph.

ing that Miss Meredith did not understand that language.

"This unusual procedure increased my curiosity, and, as Meredith continued to act as interpreter for his lovely companion throughout the meal, I found myself marveling and speculating as to her origin and how it was that she seemed to prefer the odd lingo to English.

"After dinner the two sat together on the after-deck, apparently preferring to be alone; but the next morning they drew their chairs into the circle of passengers and joined in the general conversation. As soon as Meredith found that I had spent a great deal of time in South America, he gave me all his attention and, having a common interest, we soon were chatting away like old friends. I had always thought I knew something about South America and its fauna and people; but I soon found that I was a mere novice compared with Meredith. His knowledge was marvelous, and he appeared to have been in every nook and corner of the continent. But all the time that we were talking, in the back of my head I was wondering who Miss Meredith was, and why she spoke that strange dialect. I didn't feel well enough acquainted to ask personal questions, and I didn't want to appear rude or curious. But at last Meredith himself brought the matter up. He had just repeated in the odd tongue, something I had said, and then, turning to me, he apologized for speaking in a language unintelligible to me, remarking by way of explanation, that Miss Meredith did not readily understand English as she had only recently learned to speak it."

" 'She speaks it charmingly,' I replied. 'But I've been wondering what language it is that she prefers—I cannot seem to place it and I know most of the European dialects.'

" 'It's not European,' laughed Meredith. 'It's Tucumari—an Indian dialect. Perhaps you never heard of it.'

" 'No, I never did,' I admitted. 'But then,' I added, 'I know very few of the Indian dialects. But if it's not too personal a question, may I ask how Miss Meredith happens to be so familiar with an Indian tongue? I suppose her nurse—'

" 'No,' he interrupted, 'I do not think any Tucumari has ever visited the most remote outposts of civilization. To all intents and purposes they are an unknown tribe. It's a long story. By the way, did you ever hear of the Waupona Bird or the Monkey-Men?'

" 'I never heard of the bird,' I told him, 'at least not by that name. But I've heard stories of the Monkey-Men—purely imaginary and fantastic tales of the Indians, of course.'

"Meredith smiled. 'It's a dangerous thing to condemn anything as purely fantastic, unless we are sure, he remarked as he rose. 'Excuse me a moment,' he added. 'I'd like to show you a specimen I have in my room.'

"A moment later he returned with a long, slender package wrapped in bark-cloth. Unrolling this he disclosed a magnificent feather head-dress composed of the most remarkable and beautiful feathers I have ever seen. Attached to a band of dyed or stained bark-cloth were fully one hundred feathers varying in length from waving plumes over three feet long to short, curved, delicate feathers a few inches in length, and each and every one a brilliant, gleaming royal-purple color that changed to mauve, violet and magenta shades as they swayed gently in the breeze. In size, texture and form the feathers were like those from the sacred Quetzal bird of Central America, but a thousand times more beautiful than the emerald green plumes of that famed trogan.

"I fairly gaped with astonishment and admiration at the sight. 'Where in the world did you run across that?' I cried, 'And from what marvelous bird were those feathers obtained?'

" 'The feathers,' replied Meredith, 'are from the Waupona Bird, and the head-dress is the crown of the King of the Monkey-Men. I may add that I took it from the king's head with my own hands, so there's nothing either imaginary or fantastic about it. It's a long story, as I said, but if you'd like to hear it, very well.'

"As he spoke, Meredith reached over and placed the feather crown on the girl's head and said something in Tucumari. Crowned with the marvelous purple diadem, she seemed transformed into some Incan or Aztec princess, and as Meredith related the story of their adventures, I listened spell-bound, for the tale was more wonderful than any fiction.

" 'Do you remember the wreck of the river steamer *Magdalena?*' he asked. I nodded. 'It was a terrible catastrophe,' I said. 'As I recollect it, not one of her crew or passengers escaped.'

" 'Among the passengers,' continued Meredith, 'was my motherless two year-old daughter Ruth, in charge of a trusted nurse. The shocking news reached me at Caura, and I at once led a searching party to the scene of the disaster. But not a survivor could be found, not even a body could be recovered. The perai fish and alligators destroyed all evidences of the victims' fate. In an effort to forget my awful loss, I resumed my former profession of field naturalist, and for the next fifteen years I spent my life in the bush. Often, of course, I penetrated to unknown and unexplored districts, and on my last trip I found myself in a remote region upon one of the great forest rivers fully three hundred miles from the coast and from all traces of civilization. My only companions were my two boatmen; Pépe, a pure blooded Indian, and José, a mestizo. Everything had gone smoothly and without any unusual incident, and as the river narrowed and the current quickened, we realized that we were approaching the highlands and the limits of navigable water. Suddenly Pépe, in the bow, stopped paddling and held up his hand for silence. Then, as we floated motionless, we caught the faint sounds of human voices from beyond a wooded point.

" 'Slowly and cautiously we moved forward to the screen of branches and peered through the foliage. Beyond the point, the stream swept in a half-circle along a narrow beach under a bank crowned with huge trees. Upon the beach were a number of dug-outs, and upon the bank were a dozen or more thatched huts. Here and there the naked forms of Indians were visible, and beside the nearest canoe were two men, one braiding a bark rope; the other daubing pitch on the craft. It was their voices we had heard, but the dialect was strange to me. Presently Pépe turned. "It is well, Señor," he whispered. "They speak the Metaki and are my people."

" 'As he finished, he shouted words in his own tongue, and we paddled into view. As we emerged from our hiding place, each of the Indians on the beach grasped his blowgun and stood ready to use his poisoned darts if necessity arose. But a few words from Pépe reassured them; the weapons were laid aside, and as our canoe touched the shore, the two savages grasped the gunwales and rushed it up the beach.

" 'Instantly all was commotion in the village, and as we stepped ashore, we were surrounded by a crowd of chattering, wondering Indians of both sexes and all ages, for it was the first time they had ever seen civilized men. To their innumerable comments and questions, Pépe replied in his own language. Presently José, too, was talking, using a distinct dialect, which the Metakis seemed to understand.

" 'Now and then I could catch a word, but most of it was unintelligible to me, and, addressing Pépe and José, I asked them if none of the Indians could speak any dialect I knew. At my words, scowls and black looks spread over the faces of some of the men, and I realized that they had understood my words and were suspicious when they heard Spanish. But presently, as Pépe spoke

with them, their faces cleared. '"Si, Señor,"' he said, turning to me. '"Several speak Atami and some understand Spanish. They say all Spaniards are bad and are to be killed. I tell them you are from another land and of a race who fought with the Spaniards and that you are a friend and have presents."'

"'The distribution of a few gifts cemented the friendship of the Metakis; a new palm hut was built for me, and we soon felt quite at home. I had already decided to remain at the village for some time, as it was an excellent spot for collecting, and Melanga, the cacique, who spoke Atami, was a friendly old chap and appeared much interested in my work.

"'I had lived among the Metakis for some time and had secured many fine things, when I made a notable discovery. I was visiting Melanga and noticed a number of feather crowns and girdles hanging on the rear wall of his hut. Stepping nearer to examine them—for quite frequently rare or new birds may be found among the Indians' ornaments, I saw, among the ordinary toucan, parrot and macaw feathers, a bunch of plumes of wonderful purple. They were unlike anything I had ever seen, and I knew instantly that they were from some undescribed species of bird. Turning to the cacique, I asked from what bird they were taken.

"'"They are from Waupona,"' he replied, '"the king of birds and are to be worn only by chiefs in time of war or at great ceremonies."'

"'The Waupona?' I asked. 'I have never heard the name. Tell me, where lives this king of birds? Why have your hunters never taken one for me?'

"'"Listen and I will tell you,"' replied Melanga. "'Many days travel to the south is a great valley. Within this valley are trees not like other trees, for their leaves are red. And through this valley runs a river that sings. This valley is the home of the Waupona, the king of birds. But also within this valley dwell savage men, men who climb like monkeys in the trees and who kill all who enter their valley. These monkey-men worship the Waupona as their god, and the Waupona warns them of the approach of strangers. Many of the Metakis have gone forth to brave the dangers of the valley and to secure the feathers of the Waupona, but few have ever returned.

"'"We Metakis do not hold sacred the Waupona as do the monkey-men, but rather prize him as a token of great bravery and prowess, for he who comes back from that valley with the Waupona plumes may become a chief of his tribe. For many years now, none have sought the prize. I alone of the Metakis have the feathers of the king of birds, and those I took while still a young man."'

"'Undoubtedly, I thought, the old cacique was romancing. There was no question that the feathers were real, that they were highly prized, and like as not the bird was confined to some restricted area in a district inhabited by a hostile tribe. But Melanga's yarn of red trees, monkey-men, and a singing river was, I mentally decided, merely the Indian's love for adding imaginary frills to a story and perhaps mixed with a little superstition. At any rate, I had already decided to go after the Waupona, and I told Melanga of my intention.'

"'The old fellow looked really sad. He declared I would lose my life and he assured me that no Indians would accompany me. At last, however, he admitted that a white man might succeed, for he had a wholesome and almost superstitious regard for my gun, and he also admitted that one of his men knew the way to the Waupona's valley, having once travelled that far with the idea of securing the coveted plumes, although his courage had failed him at the last. Both he and Melanga agreed that the trip was long and arduous, mainly through the forest, until a large river was reached, which was to be followed for three days. I suggested that a raft might be built and the trip shortened and made easier by floating down this stream and the Metakis agreed that this might easily be done, with a party of six, although the idea had never occurred to them before.

"'It did not take long to make all preparations for the trip. But the following morning all was in readiness, and at daybreak we set out, our scanty luggage on our shoulders, led by Tinana, our guide, and two other Metakis. For four days we tramped steadily through the forest, throughout that time gradually ascended towards the interior highlands. On the morning of the fifth day we entered a thicker jungle, and in the afternoon heard the sound of running water. Presently we came out upon the banks of a good sized river. It was a swift flowing stream without rapids as far as could be seen, and excellent for our purpose. There was abundant material for a raft at hand, and as soon as camp was made we began preparations.

"'The next two days were occupied in building a raft, in doing which we used the light, cork-like balsa trees, bound together with lianas and floored with bamboo. And on the third day we embarked. The craft floated high and buoyantly and sped down-stream with gratifying speed. For six days we floated along swiftly and easily, and on the seventh day Tinana assured me that in two days more we could go ashore and in four days we could reach the valley of the Waupona birds. Fortunately we met no bad rapids, and at the allotted time we ran the raft ashore and resumed our tramp through the forest. The first day the way led across rocky ridges and through deep cañons filled with a mass of tangled vines, sawgrass, thorn-trees and cactus, where we had to cut a trail as we proceeded. The next day was even worse; the ascent became constantly sharper, the jungles more impenetrable, while we frequently waded streams of ice cold mountain water. By nightfall, we had reached an altitude so great that we shivered with cold despite a roaring fire in the small cavern where we camped. But the worst of the trip was over, and Tinana told me that only two more days remained between us and the valley. Early the next morning we crossed the highest ridge of the mountains, with several snow-capped peaks in sight, and rapidly descended the farther slope. The jungle soon replaced the scanty vegetation of the higher altitudes; the air became warmer, and by night we were again in open forest and a tropical climate.

"'Soon after noon the next day, Tinana showed signs of uneasiness and stopped now and then to peer ahead and about, searching the earth with his keen eyes, and listening intently to every sound. He was evidently nervous. The Metakis kept their blowguns in readiness for instant use, and I felt a tingle of excitement, for I realized we were in hostile country and nearing the haunts of the Waupona and Melanga's mythical monkey-men. But it was mid-afternoon when Tinana crouched low, and with a gesture for silence, beckoned to me. Crawling to his side, where he squatted behind a dense cluster of vines, I peered out through the foliage in the direction he indicated.

"'At our feet the earth ended in a sheer precipice, and at its foot, fully a thousand feet below, and stretching for miles into the distance, was a great sunlit valley that gleamed like a sea of blood. A vast expanse of vivid scarlet broken by the silver thread of a ribbon through its centre, and by little patches of green; a marvelous sight. We had reached our goal. Melanga had not exaggerated the wonder of this valley. Now that we had reached the haunt of the Waupona, I was almost prepared to believe in the monkey-men.'"

CHAPTER II.

"'FOR a long time I gazed fascinated at the great red valley, and could scarcely credit my own senses. It seemed so incredible. It seemed like some weird dream, or such a scene as one might expect to see on Mars. At last Tinana touched my arm and suggested that we delay no longer, but attempt to descend to the valley right away. This task appeared impossible. The spot where we stood was the verge of a precipice, obviously impassable. Crawling back a few yards, Tinana led us by a circuitous route until we came to the edge of a large lake surrounded by forest. The upper end of the lake was lost among the trees, but near us, the lower end washed against a rocky ledge. There seemed no outlet to the lake, but dim and faint in the distance, I heard the roar of falling water.

"'Through a thick tangle, Tinana led the way to a rough steep gorge, and as we slipped and picked our way along the declevity, I now and then caught brief glimpses of the red valley through the intervening foliage. Constantly, too, the roar of the waterfall became louder, and presently, as we rounded a turn in the trail, I saw the cataract. Before us, and towering for hundreds of feet above the valley, rose a sheer rock wall, and half way up its face, a great white column of water rushed outward through a tunnel-like opening in the solid cliff.

"'Straight into the air it spouted for nearly a hundred feet, to spread and fall in a great fan-shaped dazzling mass to the valley far below. It was an awe-inspiring sight—this great scimitar of water bathed in a veil of mist, and forced with irresistible power through a fissure in the precipice. But I could not see that we were any nearer a solution of the problem of reaching the valley, except that we were now within a few hundred feet of the red trees instead of the thousand feet that had separated us when we had first viewed the weird spot. But we had not yet reached the end of our descent. Directly under that roaring, terrific mass of outflung water, Tinana led on, until at last, he halted on a broad terrace or ledge covered with jungle and barely one hundred feet above the valley with its scarlet-leaved trees. Here, screened from possible observation from below, Tinana explained that it would be necessary to make a ladder of vines in order to descend. No doubt a single tough liana dropped over the cliff would have served him and his fellows, but the Indians knew that it was beyond the powers of any white man to slide down or clamber up a trailing vine for a hundred feet, and all started at work to fashion a rude though serviceable rope ladder of the strong lianas that everywhere draped the trees.

"'It was slow work, and as the Indians busied themselves, I crept to the cliff edge and studied the valley. I could see no signs of human beings; no huts, no smoke that bespoke inhabitants. No animals appeared upon the open swales of green among the trees, and I felt convinced that Melanga had drawn upon his imagination when he had spoken of the 'monkey-men.' It seemed impossible that any human begins had once occupied the place and had moved away or died off since he made his last journey to the Waupona country. But Tinana did not share my views. He and the other Metakis were nervous, frightened, and insisted that some terrible hostile beings inhabited the valley. No fire was permitted that night, and despite all efforts, I began to feel nervous and on a tension myself, starting at every sound, sleeping badly, and having nightmarish dreams. But the bright morning sun dispelled my unwonted fears, and after a careful scrutiny of the valley, Tinana and his fellows cautiously dropped the frail ladder over the verge of the cliff. Then, half fearfully, Tinana commenced to descend. He reached the valley in safety, looked up, and signalled for us to follow. Backing over the edge of the precipice I, too, went down the ladder. Despite the fact that Tinana had secured the lower end, the thing swayed horribly, and I marvelled that he could ever have reached the bottom with the thing hanging loose. But a hundred feet is not far, and within a few minutes we all stood together at the base of the cliff, gazing about us at the strange and bizarre trees with their immense banner-like leaves of red. They were huge, gnarled and twisted, with innumerable pendent roots like those of mangroves or banyans, and their broad-spreading crowns were so interlaced and tangled that they formed an impenetrable roof above our heads. From above, the place had seemed almost impossible, a weirdly strange and unnatural spot; but now that I stood beneath the trees, I realized that, after all, there was nothing so very strange or remarkable about it. The trees, I saw, were some species of giant croton, very similar in form and color of leaves to the ornamental crotons grown in gardens, and hence in no way more remarkable or unnatural than those red-leaved plants.

"'Suddenly, from seemingly near at hand, came an odd musical sound, a note that rose and fell like the strumming of a guitar, and apparently issuing from the stream that flowed near. The Indians started, drew together, lifted their weapons, and cast frightened glances about. But there was no sign of human beings within sight. It was the 'singing river' of Melanga, and as I realized this, I laughed. Strange I had not thought of it sooner. It was a perfectly natural and not uncommon phenomenon, a sound produced by loose pebbles and stones tinkling against one another as they were moved by the current, and magnified by the water. I tried to explain this to the Indians, but I could see that they were convinced the music was of supernatural origin. My mestizo, José, was the most nervous of all.

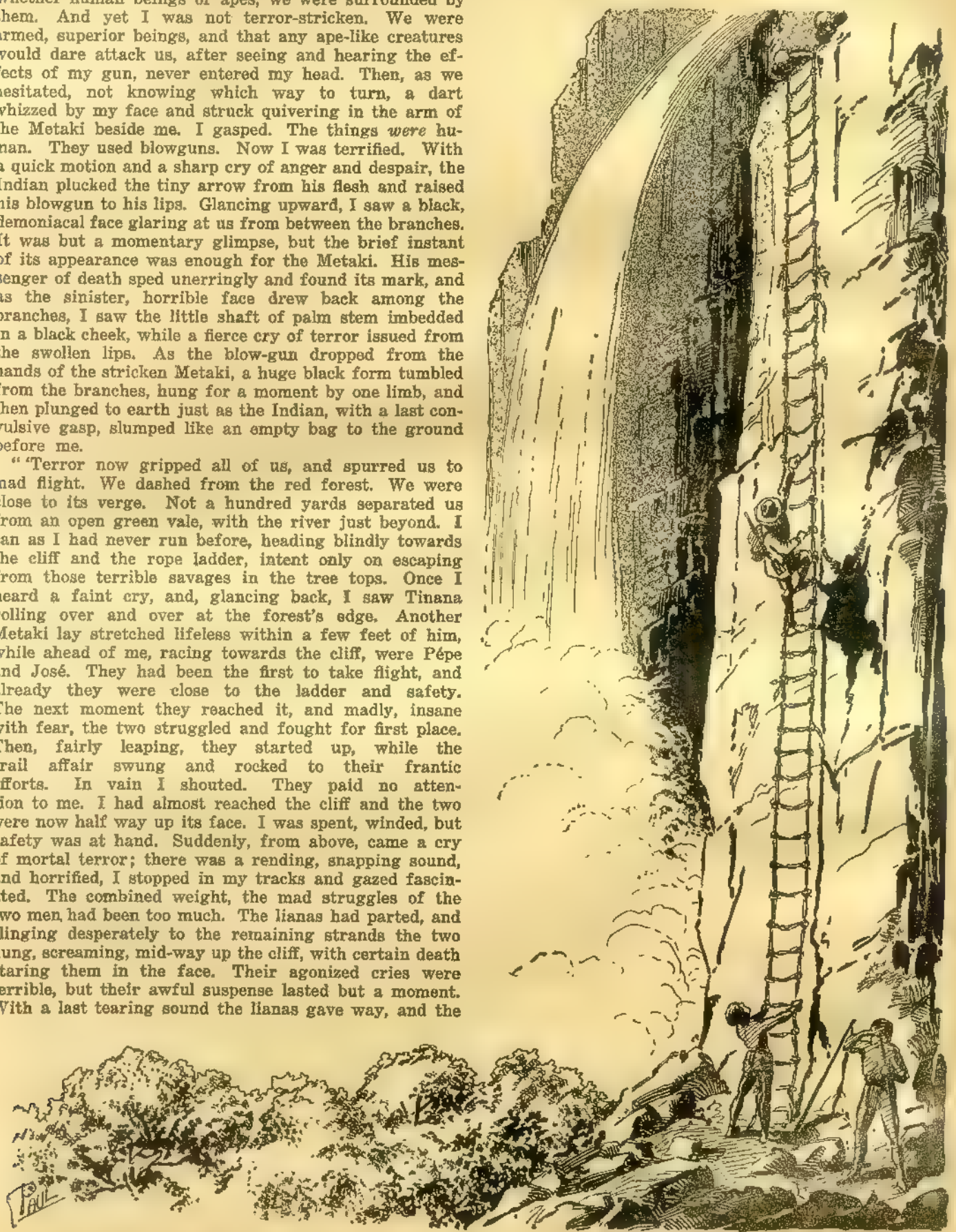
"'Suddenly my words were interrupted by a harsh, metallic cry from the tree tops, and instantly everyone wheeled and stared in the direction whence the sound came. Among the branches there was a flash of dazzling purple, and upon a dead limb, in plain view, alighted the most gorgeously beautiful bird I had ever seen. Instantly I knew it for a trogan, but a trogan three times as large and a thousand times more vivid and wonderful in color than even the famed Resplendent Trogan or Quetzal. From its head a great curved crest fell forward over its beak and down its neck while, from above its tail, long, graceful fern-like plumes extended for several feet. From head to tail the creature was intense purple, gleaming with hues of gold and violet as the light played upon its plumage, while from shoulder to shoulder across the breast was a broad white band edged with crimson. It was the Waupona, truly the king of birds. All these details I took in at a glance. Cautiously I cocked my gun, but before I could raise the weapon to my shoulder, Tanina had placed his blowgun to his lips; with a puff of breath the tiny dart sped on its way and with fluttering wings the magnificent bird came tumbling to the earth.

"'Eagerly I dashed forward and picked up the wonderful creature which I knew no other white man had ever seen. As I examined the priceless specimen, mentally gloating over my good fortune, the discordant scream of another Waupona issued from the tree tops, and as I wheeled about, I caught a glimpse of a second purple bird flashing away on whirring wings.

"'Almost at the same instant there was a movement among the scarlet leaves, and some large dark body showed through the foliage. Almost involuntarily I raised my gun and blazed away. At the report, the branches bent and thrashed about, and a huge, black, ape-like creature came hurtling, crashing to the ground. Instantly pandemonium broke loose above our heads, and screams, cries and yells resounded from the tree-tops,

while the branches swayed and trembled as unseen, invisible beings leaped and rushed among them. Swift across my mind came remembrance of Melanga's words—his tale of 'monkey-men who lived in the trees.' He had been right after all. Whatever the things—whether human beings or apes, we were surrounded by them. And yet I was not terror-stricken. We were armed, superior beings, and that any ape-like creatures would dare attack us, after seeing and hearing the effects of my gun, never entered my head. Then, as we hesitated, not knowing which way to turn, a dart whizzed by my face and struck quivering in the arm of the Metaki beside me. I gasped. The things *were* human. They used blowguns. Now I was terrified. With a quick motion and a sharp cry of anger and despair, the Indian plucked the tiny arrow from his flesh and raised his blowgun to his lips. Glancing upward, I saw a black, demoniacal face glaring at us from between the branches. It was but a momentary glimpse, but the brief instant of its appearance was enough for the Metaki. His messenger of death sped unerringly and found its mark, and as the sinister, horrible face drew back among the branches, I saw the little shaft of palm stem imbedded in a black cheek, while a fierce cry of terror issued from the swollen lips. As the blow-gun dropped from the hands of the stricken Metaki, a huge black form tumbled from the branches, hung for a moment by one limb, and then plunged to earth just as the Indian, with a last convulsive gasp, slumped like an empty bag to the ground before me.

"'Terror now gripped all of us, and spurred us to mad flight. We dashed from the red forest. We were close to its verge. Not a hundred yards separated us from an open green vale, with the river just beyond. I ran as I had never run before, heading blindly towards the cliff and the rope ladder, intent only on escaping from those terrible savages in the tree tops. Once I heard a faint cry, and, glancing back, I saw Tinana rolling over and over at the forest's edge. Another Metaki lay stretched lifeless within a few feet of him, while ahead of me, racing towards the cliff, were Pépe and José. They had been the first to take flight, and already they were close to the ladder and safety. The next moment they reached it, and madly, insane with fear, the two struggled and fought for first place. Then, fairly leaping, they started up, while the frail affair swung and rocked to their frantic efforts. In vain I shouted. They paid no attention to me. I had almost reached the cliff and the two were now half way up its face. I was spent, winded, but safety was at hand. Suddenly, from above, came a cry of mortal terror; there was a rending, snapping sound, and horrified, I stopped in my tracks and gazed fascinated. The combined weight, the mad struggles of the two men had been too much. The lianas had parted, and clinging desperately to the remaining strands the two hung, screaming, mid-way up the cliff, with certain death staring them in the face. Their agonized cries were terrible, but their awful suspense lasted but a moment. With a last tearing sound the lianas gave way, and the two men plunged to their death upon the jagged rocks below. I was alone; alone in this awful valley that swarmed with half-human, monstrous foes; alone with all hope of escape cut off. But I would die fighting, if die I must. In the open, across the river, I might yet find



. . . Backing over the edge of the precipice I, too, went down the ladder. Despite the fact that Tinana had secured the lower end, the thing swayed horribly, and I marvelled that he could ever have reached the bottom with the thing hanging loose.

escape, might be able to stand off the creatures who, I noticed, had not left the shelter of the forest to pursue us.

" 'It was my only hope, and turning, I dashed across the smooth green glade, spurred on by the unearthly cries of rage from the red forest in my rear. A moment later and the river was before me, and, without a second's hesitation, I plunged headlong into the stream.

" 'Scarcely had the water closed upon me when I realized my efforts had been in vain. I had expected to find a shoal stream through which I could wallow or swim to the opposite shore. Instead, I sank into a deep, swirling, eddying current that swept me irresistibly along, sucking me under the surface and spinning me about like a bit of chaff. I dropped my gun, which up to then I had retained, and wildly struck out in an effort to reach the surface and fill my bursting lungs with air. At last my face broke through the water into the air and I gasped a half-breath before the whirlpools again drew me under. I felt that all was over, that I was doomed to death in the river; but even that was preferable to the poisoned darts of the savages. Then, just as I was losing consciousness, I felt my feet touch bottom. I kicked and thrashed convulsively, and struggling from the stream, dropped senseless upon a sand bar.

" 'How long I lay there dead to the world I will never know. Slowly I became aware of the sounds of voices apparently far away. Strange, gutteral discordant they sounded, and instantly memory returned; filled with stark terror, I sat up. As I did so, a cry of horror burst from my lips. Crouching within a few feet of me, his repulsive, ugly, black face peering into mine, was one of the monstrous ape-like beings. With all my exhausted strength, I struck madly at the face. A loud shout followed the resounding whack with which my hand struck the savage features, and for the first time I was aware that I was completely surrounded by fully two dozen of the strangest beings any man has ever seen.

" 'There was no doubt that they were human. But they were the most repulsively hideous men that the wildest fancy could conceive. Black as coal, with bowed legs and enormous ape-like feet, stooping shoulders and long gorilla arms, they appeared like a troop of Calibans. Their faces were broad, flat and brutal, with high cheek bones, enormously developed jaws, small turned-up noses, and little restless, roving eyes like those of an elephant. Their chins were covered with thick matted beards, and a mop of tangled hair overhung their foreheads and extended down their necks and shoulders in a sort of mane. Despite their hideousness, there was a certain expression of intelligence in their faces and eyes, and their high foreheads bespoke a large brain capacity very different from what one would expect in such low primitive types of man. Every one, too, was a giant, with great corded, rippling muscles under his black skin. Mostly they were nude, but a few wore strips of bark about their loins, and one or two had spindles of wood or bone through their ears and noses. And nearly every one grasped a short blowgun scarcely three feet in length. And I sat there trembling with fear and exhaustion on the gravel bar awaiting the death that I felt sure would be meted out to me.

" 'And yet, somehow, there appeared to be nothing antagonistic or hostile in their attitudes or expressions. The fellow I had struck had drawn out of reach, but showed no resentment; instead, all were regarding me with intense curiosity and were conversing in low, gutteral tones among themselves.

" 'Then it dawned upon me that I was undoubtedly as strange and amazing a being to them as they were to me. They had never seen a white man, had never seen clothing, and altogether I was a very different sort of being from the Indians whom they had killed.

" 'Slowly, with a great effort, I struggled to my feet. I was weak and reeled. Instantly two of the terrible creatures sprang forward and not ungently supported me and half-carried me across the bar to the shore. I recoiled at their touch, but was far too weak to resist. Then, as I sank upon the soft turf, the things gathered about, clucking, gesticulating, jabbering, and now and again very gingerly reaching out and with half fearful fingers, touching my garments, peeking up my sleeves, rubbing their hands across my boots and obviously filled with wonder. Presently a newcomer arrived carrying my hat, and the gutteral words rose high in excitement. Evidently the fellows knew the hat belonged to me, for they held it towards me, and when I placed it on my head they leaped away as if I had performed some awe-inspiring feat of magic.

" 'I began to feel somewhat reassured. Perhaps, after all, I would not be killed out of hand—I was too valuable a curiosity to be wasted, and even if I were kept a prisoner, there was a chance that I might eventually escape. But I had little time to speculate on my ultimate fate. One of the creatures, who seemed to be in charge of the party, approached me, and by gestures and signs indicated that I was to follow him. I had now regained a good bit of my strength, and surrounded by the beings, I followed the leader towards the forest. As we reached the first trees, one of the creatures sprang into the branches with the agility of a monkey, running up the hanging roots and swinging from limb to limb with his blowgun grasped in his teeth, to run off through the tree tops like a gigantic ape. One after another followed him, while several squatted among the branches and peered down at the others and myself as if expecting me to climb up. Indeed, their leader urged me on, and presently, losing his temper, jabbered at me in anything but friendly tones. Even at my best I could not have ascended the trees, but my captors had very different ideas on the subject. Forgetting their fears, they pushed me against the tree trunk and even tried to boost me up. Feeling that I should humor them, I tried my best to climb the smooth, slippery trunk, and my useless efforts brought chuckles of amusement from the savages. As I slipped back, the monkey-men examined my shoes, gabbled volubly, and called to their companions in the tree-tops. Although their lingo was unintelligible, their tones were so expressive that I felt sure they were explaining that my feet were minus toes and hence not adapted for climbing. But they had made up their minds that regardless of all obstacles or defects, their captive was going aloft.

" 'Before I fully realized what they were doing, one of the giants had seized me and lifted me above his head as easily as though I had been a child. The next second one of the fellows above reached down, grasped me by the waist, heaved me up like a sack of meal, and actually tossed me like a ball to another savage still higher up. Too astounded and frightened to cry out, and breathless from my rough handling, I merely gasped as I was tossed about like a handball. A moment later, one of the creatures sprang forward, seized me in his arms, and leaped off among the branches, carrying me with no apparent effort.

" 'Never had any other mortal such a ride. The being travelled with the speed and agility of a squirrel. He leaped from branch to branch, sometimes catching by his free hand and his feet, sometimes grasping a branch with one hand and swinging forward for a dozen feet or so to a neighboring tree; and again running upright along some projecting limb and leaping off through space or through foliage, but invariably landing as softly, as easily as a bird, never missing a foothold or colliding with a branch or twig. At first I was terrified, nauseated and I felt dizzy and in constant fear of being dropped

or torn from my captor's grasp by some branch. But presently I began to enjoy the strange sensation. The gigantic being traveled as surely and easily as though he bore no burden, and I was not even scratched by the limbs or branches, as he raced along. Mile after mile I was carried in this strange way, shifted from one creature to another from time to time, until at last the monkey-men slackened their mad pace and broke the silence they had maintained up till then. Their cries were answered from ahead, and a moment later, the tree-tops vanished and I felt my carrier spring from an outflung branch. For what seemed an endless time, we sailed through space until, with a soft thud of his thick-soled feet, my captor landed on some solid material and released his grasp of my body.

" 'Dazed, I gazed about to find myself on a narrow shelf of rock with a precipice above and below. Before me, the red-leaved forest stretched into the distance, and a little above the ledge where I sat, a great tree spread its branches towards me. Even as I tried to collect my senses, several of the monkey-men ran out upon a branch of this tree, leaped into the air, and like gigantic flying-squirrels, sailed through the intervening space and landed lightly upon the rock beside me. It was more than marvelous; it was actually incredible that any human being could be so sure-footed, so agile as to accomplish this feat.

" 'Yet I had actually witnessed it. I knew that I myself had reached the shelf of rock by the same method, borne through twenty feet of air in the grasp of one of the creatures. Glancing down at the perpendicular wall with the jagged debris fully one hundred feet below, I drew back shuddering at thought of what might have happened had my captor missed his footing, miscalculated his distance or released his grip of his human freight. Then I noticed that the number of beings on the ledge had greatly increased. There were not more than twenty who had come through the trees, yet now the ledge was fairly crowded with the strange creatures. All were chattering excitedly, and it was evident that those who had brought me were telling their friends of the trip. Presently there was a chorus of loud cries, and a monkey-man leaped from the tree to the ledge. He was, I saw, carrying the dead Waupona bird, and at sight of it every monkey-man bowed his forehead to the rock and uttered low, moaning sounds.

" 'Then they arose and listened, while the newcomer apparently told of the bird's death, and, as I judged from his tones and gestures, related how I had brought down one of the creatures with my gun. The expressions of wonder and fear that filled their faces as they listened convinced me that, with my gun, I could always have cowed the beings and been safe. But my weapon was irretrievably lost at the bottom of the river. Even the few matches in my pockets were wet and useless for performing impressive miracles. I did not have a single article which could be used for the purpose. My sole possessions were my pipe and some tobacco, my notebook and pencil, a pocket knife and handkerchief, and a handful of now useless cartridges. Somewhere my watch had been lost—probably in my mad flight from the forest—and I never carried a compass, flint, steel and tinder, or the various other articles which story tellers are so fond of utilizing in their tales, when the hero desires to work seeming miracles to impress savages.

" 'I had little time for such thoughts, however. The leader of the crowd was signalling me to follow him, and with no choice in the matter I trudged along the ledge. The path ascended rapidly, rounded an angle on the mountain side, and, turning abruptly, entered a narrow fissure in the face of the cliff.

" 'The sudden transition from bright sunshine to almost Stygian darkness blinded me temporarily, and I proceeded for fully one hundred feet through the tunnel-like passage before I was able to distinguish my surroundings. Then, ahead, I caught a glimmer of ruddy light, and a moment later, we emerged in an immense, lofty chamber; a huge cavern formed by nature, its vaulted roof hung with stalactites, among which was an aperture which admitted daylight and illuminated the cave with a faint radiance.

" 'In the centre of the rock floor a large fire burned brightly, casting a lurid glare upon the walls, which glistened with minute crystals that gleamed and scintillated like myriads of gems. Everywhere in the walls I could see the yawning, black entrances to smaller caves or passages while, squatted around the walls, seated by the fire and peering from the holes, were scores of the monkey-men with their women and children. All this I saw as we crossed the few yards of space between the passageway and the fire.

" 'Then my captors halted and threw themselves upon the floor and uttered wailing cries. Before us, seated upon a rude bench, formed by knocking a cluster of stalagmites to pieces, was an enormous monkey-man. His tangled beard fell to his bulging middle, his stiff hair stood out about his sinister face like a lion's mane, and on his head was a crown of the purple plumes of the Waupona bird. Instantly I recognized him as the King of the Monkey-men, and equally instantly I took a violent and deep-seated dislike for the savage, glowering, old potentate.

" 'He was by far the ugliest being I had ever seen. The most hideous of his subjects was a beauty by comparison, and his expression was indescribably cruel, bestial and crafty. Yet, despite his ugliness and repulsiveness, his matted filthy hair and beard, and his black fat body, there was something regal in his appearance, as with a frown on his forehead and his reddened eyes gleaming, he surveyed me with a haughty contemptuous stare.

" 'And I could not help admiring his self-control. Although I felt sure that he was consumed with curiosity at my appearance, yet he gave no sign of wonder or surprise, he merely stared at me with his wicked eyes. Though his gaze was most disconcerting and malignant, I managed to stare back without flinching. This evidently was not at all pleasing to His Majesty and I could see that his ill temper was rising. Doubtless he was accustomed to having all bow before him, and he had no liking for a being who looked him boldly in the eye and failed to kow-tow to his regal presence. He seemed about to speak, but the next second the fellow with the dead Waupona came cringingly to the throne and reverently placed the dead bird on the floor beside the king. Instantly the monarch flew into a towering rage. His mane and hair fairly bristled, his eyes blazed, and he roared out a tirade of words, pointing first at me and then at the bird and in his excitement rising from his throne and crouching like a jaguar ready to spring. Obviously he possessed a most violent temper and a nasty disposition, and I had a hunch that we would not get on at all well together. It was equally clear that the killing of the Waupona was an unpardonable offense and a terrible crime, and that the king held me accountable for it. But as the fellow who had brought the bird strove to explain, and with graphic gestures showed how the creature had been killed by a blowgun in an Indian's hands, the royal temper cooled a bit and the king listened intently. I had expected that I would be brought to trial for shooting the monkey-man whom we had first seen, but he had apparently been quite forgotten in the greater offense of destroying the sacred bird. As far as I could judge, no reference was made to him, but I soon found I was mistaken. The fellow was now telling the king of my part in the affairs of the day. His

actions were unmistakable, and his imitation of the report of my gun, while it would have been ludicrous at another time, was realistic enough for me. Evidently, however, this was a bit too miraculous a yarn for the king to swallow. He had to be shown. Uttering a sharp command, he pointed to the dead bird and then at me. One of the men lifted the dead bird tenderly, and carrying it across the cave, placed it upon a jutting point of rock. Then, to my amazement, they indicated by signs and gestures that I was to repeat my miracle of the gun and bring down the dead Waupona from its resting place. I was helpless, absolutely at a loss. The monkey-men had quite overlooked the fact that the chief accessory, my gun, was missing; if indeed they had ever seen it. There I stood, racking my brains for some escape from my dilemma while, as proof of the earnestness of the king's intentions, two of the beings held blowguns to their lips and pointed at my body. If I failed to obey the king's orders, I was as good as dead. In all probability, I thought my life would be forfeited anyway. Then, suddenly, an inspiration came to me. My hands, nervously fumbling in my pockets, had come in contact with my cartridges. Holding one of these hidden in my left hand, I stepped nearer the fire, and dramatically raising my right arm, I pointed at the dead bird and gave a sharp cry, at the same instant tossing the shell into the flames. Instantly all faces were turned towards the Waupona bird. All eyes were rivetted on the creature or on my outstretched arm. There was a tense moment of suspense and then, with a deafening report, the coals and firebrands flew into the air, there was a puff of dense white smoke and the roar of the exploding shell reverberated through the cavern with the noise of thunder.

"'Not a monkey-man ever saw what happened to the Waupona bird. A mighty cry of abject terror arose from the crowd of savages and, as the smoke cleared away, I looked about to find every occupant of the cave, even the king himself, prone on the floor, while a weird, moaning, chant-like wail arose from the awe-struck beings. I glanced towards the Waupona bird and could scarcely believe my eyes. It had completely vanished! Whether the jar of the explosion had knocked it from the rock and it had dropped into some fissure, or what had become of it, I never knew. But luck or fate had played into my hands.

"'The king was the first to recover, and cautiously raising his head he looked about. As he, too, saw that the bird had disappeared, he kow-towed again, wailing louder than any of his subjects. Then he again glanced fearfully about, and seeing me, standing unhurt and erect among his prostrate tribesmen, he fairly grovelled on the floor. My trick had more than fulfilled all my hopes, and it was fully ten minutes before the monkey-men and their ruler regained enough confidence to raise their heads. Then, since nothing more happened, the king rose tremblingly to his feet and seated himself a bit shakingly on his throne. One by one his subjects also rose. But the king's expression had completely altered. His savage glare had given place to a look of awe, and there was no hint of anger or enmity in his tones when he spoke again. For the time being, at least, I felt I was safe, and as I still had nearly a dozen cartridges in my pocket, I felt sure that as long as a fire was available, I could keep both king and subjects in mortal fear of my powers.

"'The fellow who had brought the Waupona was now bowing before me and signing for me to follow him. As I stepped forward, he rose, and passing the fire—at which he shied a bit—he led the way across the cave towards one of the openings in the opposite wall.

"'For some distance we passed along a narrow tunnel, until my guide turned to one side and I found myself in a fairly large cavern with a rude couch of palm leaves on one side and a smouldering fire in the centre, the whole dimly lit by a crevice high in the wall. Evidently this was my quarters or my prison, and with a final obeisance, the monkey-man withdrew.

"'I threw myself upon the pile of leaves, utterly tired and spent. Whatever might be in store for me could be met as it occurred. For the present, rest and sleep meant far more to me than the future. I mentally thanked God that I had the cartridges, and my last conscious thought was that I only wished they were sticks of dynamite.

CHAPTER III

"'I HAD no means of knowing how long I slept, but as no glimmer of light showed on the walls I felt sure it was still night. I felt much refreshed, but terribly hungry and thirsty, and I wondered if my captors intended to let me die of thirst or starvation. Then as I glanced about, I saw by the light of the smouldering fire, a calabash of water on the floor. I drained this and again slept. I was aroused by someone moving about, and opened my eyes to see the giant fellow who had led me to my cave. He was fanning the fire into a blaze, and beside him was a plantain leaf on which were several strange fruits and a piece of meat. Evidently he was about to serve my breakfast, and all fears of being starved were cast aside.

"'When the fellow heard me move, he turned, grinned amiably and bobbed his head reassuringly. Despite his ugliness he seemed a rather good-natured brute, and the fact that he had brought food rather won my liking for him. But I was handicapped and prevented from making any friendly overtures because I could not understand a word he said nor could I make him understand a word of any dialect I knew. However, we managed to get along on sign language, and he soon served the half-cooked meat, meanwhile grimacing and kow-towing, twisting his broad black face into ludicrous grins, and reminding me of an overgrown puppy trying to make friends with a stranger. While I ate, he squatted before me, gazing fixedly up at me with an expression of such wonder and curiosity in his little eyes that I could not help laughing. He looked for all the world like some country lad watching the animals fed at a managerie. Apparently my laughter delighted him, and he was quite happy to think that such a remarkable being as myself should take any notice of him. The most important thing, it seemed to me, was to try to learn a smattering of his dialect. Pointing to a fruit I said, 'Fruit.' For a space he looked puzzled. Then he caught the idea, grinned delightedly and muttered 'Poot.' Then, reaching out his paw, he touched the fruit with his finger and said 'Imtah.'

"'There was nothing stupid about him, and once he had grasped the idea of learning my language and teaching me his, we got along famously. He leaped about, pointing to one object after another, pronouncing or rather trying to pronounce the English names as I uttered them, and very carefully enunciating the equivalents in his own lingo. Before I had finished my light meal, I had learned the names of fruit, rock, fire, water, meat, calabash, feet, hands and a number of other things. But I realized it would be far slower work acquiring a knowledge of verbs, adjectives and grammar. However, there was no time like the present and, rather doubtful as to whether his intellect would carry him far enough to understand what I desired, I rose and leaped up and down repeating the word 'jump.' Instantly the fellow imitated my actions and cried 'Ik, Ik.' He even went farther, and leaping clear across the floor, shouted "Ikarak' and after a short hop exclaimed 'Taik.' I was

more than pleased at the being's intelligence, and I knew that I could find my time fully occupied in learning the monkey-men's jargon. My next attempt was to learn his name. It was some time before I could make my meaning clear on this point, but at last, striking his breast, he said proudly 'Mumba!' repeating the word several times.

"'All right, Mumba,' I laughed, and striking my own breast, repeated my name; 'Henry.' That was quite beyond the powers of his vocal cords, however, and a gutteral 'Geny' was the best he could do. At last Mumba gathered up the remains of breakfast and went hopping away down the passage, and I gave myself up to thinking over my predicament and my future. I felt sure that I was a prisoner. I knew it was out of the question to attempt any escape. To be sure, no one was on guard as far as I could see, and when I peered into the passageway, not a living being was in sight. To reach the open air, however, I would be forced to pass through the main cavern with its hordes of occupants, and even if I did succeed in stealing out unnoticed, how was I to gain the valley, let alone escape from it? For you will remember that I had been brought to the ledge of rock by air line in the grasp of a monkey-man.

"'But I was curious to know just how much of a captive I was; also I had no desire to remain cooped up in my cavern, if I was free to go elsewhere. Quite boldly, therefore, I left the room and wandered down the passage towards the main cave. Without hindrance, I gained

Mile after mile, I was carried in this strange way, shifted from one creature to another from time to time.

the throne-room, as I might call it. A few women and children and one or two men were there and at my appearance the adults threw themselves on the floor, while the youngsters scuttled like frightened rats into their black holes. I was received more like a god than a prisoner, and no one made any attempt to interfere with my movements. Unfortunately I had not the least idea from which of the holes I had entered the cavern. But one was as good as another and I remembered I had faced the fire with the king's throne at my right when I had arrived. I chose the largest opening on that side and walked cautiously along the dark tunnel. Either luck was with me or else several entrances led to the open air, for presently I saw light ahead, and a moment later came out upon the rock shelf above the scarlet valley. No one was in sight on the ledge, and I began to wonder if I *was* a prisoner after all.

"'As far as I could see, I was free to walk away—provided I could reach the earth below, yet I was as securely imprisoned as though I were behind bolts and bars. The pleasure of being in the air and sunshine again was sufficient for the time being, and seating myself upon a rock, I scrutinized the valley, trying to locate the spot where I had entered it and had first met the monkey-men.

"'There was little difficulty in finding the place. About two miles away the silvery flash of the column of water could be seen, and from there I could follow the river's course to the spot where Tinana had killed the Waupona.

"'Still following the course of the stream with my eyes, I was surprised to find that it apparently ended in a second towering cliff at the further end of the valley, while, on the side opposite to where I sat, a rock wall rose sheer for fully a thousand feet.

"'The valley was completely surrounded by insurmountable barriers and its inhabitants were effectually cut off from the rest of the world. No wonder, I thought, that they had remained so primitive, so distinct from all other races and had developed such unique characteristics. For all I knew, the beings might have been isolated here since their ancestors evolved from apes. But my speculations on such matters soon gave way to more practical things. I noted that the ledge descended towards the valley, becoming narrower and narrower and forming a mere trail or fissure in its course. As I studied it, I became certain that it would be possible to follow along it to the earth far beneath me. I determined to try it. It was a precarious pathway, and I picked my way cautiously and gingerly. Several times I found small gulleys or fissures which seemed to lead to the valley, but each turned out to be a blind lead or were too steep for human feet to descend. Still keeping to the main ledge I continued downwards, until at last

I came to a spot where I could go no farther. Then, for the first time, I noticed something which had escaped me before. The tree from which the monkey-men had leaped to the ledge was several feet higher than the spot on which they had landed. They might leap from the tree to the ledge, but even the ape-like beings could not, I felt certain, leap *up* and across twenty feet of space. There must be another means of reaching the valley, and as I realized this, I heard voices from beneath me. Very cautiously I peered over the cliff. Almost directly beneath the spot where I stood, a monkey-woman was moving about, picking up fruits from beneath a low tree.

" 'As I watched her, she half turned towards the cliff and uttered a shout as if calling to someone. In answer there was a low cry, and the next instant a monkey-man issued from a fissure in the rock, scrambled down a few yards of broken stone and joined the woman. After him followed another and another, until half a dozen of the beings stood under the tree. As I watched them, they wrapped the fruits in leaves, secured the bundles with vines, and began clamboring up the rock-strewn slope to vanish at last in the fissure. My suspicions were confirmed; there *was* another exit, and I determined to find it. My plan was simple. No doubt, I thought, the fruits would be carried to the main cabin, and, provided I could reach there first, I could see by which passage the fruit-gatherers entered. Hurrying back up the ledge as rapidly as possible I reached the tunnel, dashed along this, and emerged in the main cave just in time. Two men were crossing the floor carrying leaf-wrapped burdens, and a moment later, a woman and several men appeared from a small opening in the wall. There was no doubt about the exit, but the cave was well filled with people and I hesitated about attempting to make my way out. Better leave it until tomorrow when there are few about, I decided. However, I was afraid that I might forget which hole led to the valley, and the idea of making a rough sketch of the cavern with the location of the various openings occurred to me. Seating myself on a fallen piece of stalactite, I drew out my note-book and pencil and began to draw a rough plan of the cave. At first the savages cast frightened sidelong glances at me, as if fearing I was about to produce some magic, but as nothing happened, they regained confidence, and drawn by the savage's insatiable curiosity, came closer and closer to me. Having completed my hurried sketch of the cavern, I commenced sketching the men and women, and had just completed a drawing of a woman roasting a piece of meat over the fire, when one of the men glanced over my shoulder and caught sight of what I was doing. Instantly he uttered a shrill cry, leaped back and poured out a perfect torrent of excited words. Everyone rushed to him, and jabbering and gesticulating, they crowded about me, craning their necks, peering at the page of my book. All were tremendously excited. I had worked another miracle.

" 'Tearing out the leaf with the drawing, I handed it to the nearest monkey-man. Never had artist a more appreciative or enthusiastic audience, and the cries of admiration and wonder mingled with roars of laughter as the paper was passed from hand to hand. The noise evidently attracted the attention of those in the nearby caves, for men and women appeared from every side and from each dark hole in the cavern walls. Then, in the midst of the hubbub, I glanced up to see the king himself approaching. So thoroughly engrossed were the people that they gave no heed to their monarch. They did not even bother to kow-tow before him. For an instant he glowered, as if about to pronounce dire punishment on all, and then, as one of the men handed him the sketch, his expression underwent a most remarkable change, and incredulity and amazement spread over his hideous face.

" 'For a time he studied it intently, and then, approaching me, he made it quite clear by signs that he wished me to make a picture of himself.

" 'Quite willingly, and smiling at the thought of attempting to reproduce his ugliness adequately, I commenced sketching, while an awed silence fell upon the assembled throng. No doubt it was a very inferior likeness and of no artistic merit, for I lay no claims to being a portrait artist. Still, if not flattering, it was unmistakably the king—long beard, bristling hair, feather crown and all. As I completed the rapid sketch, I tore the page from my note book and handed it to the monarch. The expression upon his face, when he saw the likeness, was so ludicrous that I shook with laughter despite my efforts to control my amusement.

" 'The king examined the sketch carefully, lifted his hand and touched his crown, felt his hair, stroked his beard and seemed mightily puzzled to find them all in their proper places. For a moment he thought that they had been transferred bodily to the paper. Then he turned the sheet over, looked on the blank side and, utterly unable to solve the mystery, his grim, awed features broke into a smile of self-satisfaction. He ran to his throne and placed the paper upright on the seat. Then, squatting before it, he gave himself up to admiring his own portrait. It was the first time he had ever seen himself as others saw him.

" 'That I had risen tremendously in the estimation of the monkey-men was evident, for my ability as an artist apparently, seemed fully as wonderful and supernatural to these beings, as the exploding cartridge had been, though it lacked its terrifying qualities. So, from being feared and regarded with a rather awed respect, I found I had been transformed to a popular idol. My popularity, however, had its drawbacks, for wherever I went the monkey-people crowded at my heels and followed me about like a throng of small boys in the wake of a famous baseball player. I was convinced, however, that I had no further cause to fear death or ill treatment, for as long as I could perform such miraculous feats and could please the crusty old king, or could impress him and his subjects by transferring their likenesses to paper, I was perfectly safe. I felt very much as Mark Twain's Yankee hero must have felt at King Arthur's Court, except that the king of the monkey-men was several thousand years behind King Arthur.

" 'I was amazed to find how exceedingly primitive these beings were, because the fact that they used blowguns had at first conveyed the idea that they were not much behind other South American tribes. But I had seen no signs of stone implements, no pottery, not a weapon of any sort—not even bows and arrows—and the people had not learned to trace even the crudest of pictures with a burnt stick. Here were men and women who were practically in the same condition as the ape-like ancestors of man who dwelt in the rude caves of Europe countless ages ago. Had I been among them of my own free will, and had I been free to leave when I desired, I would have welcomed my opportunity to study mankind in the making, as it were. But all my thoughts were centered upon getting away from that red valley, so I hadn't the least ethnological interest in my hosts. But it was evident that I was quite free to wander about wherever I saw fit. I entered the various tunnels and explored them, visited innumerable rooms or smaller caves and passages, and I discovered that the entire mountain was fairly honeycombed with caverns which provided chambers, passages and residences for this strange cave-dwelling race. Every room was inhabited, and I estimated that there must be fully one thousand of the monkey-people dwelling there. Their life

was of the simplest sort. The furnishings of their rooms consisted of piles of palm leaves, fires which were never permitted to die out, calabashes for utensils, rough, river-worn cobbles and pieces of broken stone for pounders and knives. For a time I was puzzled to know how these people kindled their fires, but the riddle was solved when I found one woman using a spindle of wood which she twirled in her hands against a bit of dry and semi-rotten wood. To me the strangest thing was the fact that while these people had discovered the blowgun, they had not learned to make bows and arrows, I decided that in all probability the former was discovered by accident, for the monkey-men seemed far too stupid to have actually invented or reasoned out anything, and since bows and arrows were not needed they had never hit upon them. However, I mentally decided that I would amuse myself and kill no little time by teaching the fellows to use bows, and I foresaw a lot of fun and the passing of dreary times in educating the savages along various lines.

"'As I thought of this and walked idly about, I entered a room where a man was skinning and cutting up a cavy by means of a jaggard sliver of stone, which served more after the fashion of a dull saw than a knife. For a time I watched, wondering what he would say if I showed him my pocket knife, and I was on the point of taking it from my pocket when I thought better of it. Unquestionably the fellow would be terribly impressed, but also unquestionably the king would be told of it and would demand the knife for his own use. I had no intention of losing the sole edged tool I possessed. But the sight of the savage laboring with his bit of stone gave me another idea. I desired to show the monkey-men how to make really decent stone implements. The only trouble was, of course, that I had never made any myself, but I had a vague idea of how they were formed. I had seen Indians make arrow heads by both the chipping and fire flaking methods, and I decided to try my hand at this primitive art.

"'Moreover, my idea of showing the people bows and arrows had made me realize suddenly that I might need such weapons myself, if I ever got away from the valley, and a knowledge of making stone arrow heads would serve my own purposes as well.

"'Also, the sight of the fellow dressing his game had reminded me that I was hungry, and, wondering a bit if I would be provided with food or would be expected to forage for myself, I retraced my way to the main cave and thence to my own cave. There was no food there, but in a few moments Mumba appeared with a meal of fruit, some roasted roots and a piece of scorched, half-raw meat.

"'He was in high spirits and chatted and gesticulated excitedly, but it was some time before I grasped the fact that he was trying to tell me what he had heard of my drawing. Come to think of it, I had not seen him in the crowd, and I realized that the fellow felt a bit slighted at not having seen his master working miracles. Anxious to make him a firm friend and alley, I drew out my note book and sketched the big chap as he squatted before me. He fairly danced with delight when I handed him the paper with the drawing, and he fawned upon me like a grateful puppy. To him, of course, the sketch was wealth untold, and to receive such a gift from the superior being whom he served was an honor equal to that bestowed upon the king. He could scarcely wait for me to finish my meal before scampering off to exhibit his prize to his fellows, and if the mind of a monkey-man could hold such a thing as gratitude I felt sure that Mumba would now be my firm friend for life.

"'Presently he came running back and by gestures made me understand that I was to follow him. Wondering what was up, I obeyed and, as I had surmised, I found I had been summoned by His Majesty, who was seated on his throne, surrounded by a crowd of men and women. It was soon clear that the king desired me to repeat my drawing exhibition, and for the next hour or more I was kept busy sketching monkey-people, birds, animals, insects, trees and anything and everything that came to my mind. Each time a sketch was finished, it was handed first to the king and then passed around. Their wonder increased as they studied each new and familiar thing depicted, until they were almost ready to worship me. But I soon realized that this sort of entertainment could not go on indefinitely. My supply of paper was getting perilously low and would soon be exhausted, and I knew that once I had used the last sheet and failed to produce the pictures, my status would be at an end and, in all probability I would be at an end also. So, closing my note book, I slipped it within my pocket and started to leave the cavern. This did not at all suit the king. He wanted to be entertained, and in peremptory tones, he made it quite clear that I was to continue drawing. I was in a serious position. If I obeyed, the monarch would realize that I felt I was in his power and would no doubt insist on frequent and prolonged drawing exhibitions. Moreover, if I showed fear of His Majesty, I would lose my prestige in the eyes of the people, perhaps with dire results. On the other hand, if I defied the king, his anger might be aroused and without stopping to consider the consequences, he or his people might fall upon me and destroy me at once.

"'All this flashed through my mind in a moment as I hesitated. Then I decided upon a piece of bluff to establish my *status-quo* forever. Stepping towards the fire, I drew myself up, faced the king and slowly raising my arm pointed towards the spot where the Waupona had been placed. Instantly a wild howl of fear rose from the assembled throng; many threw themselves face down on the floor, and the king, leaping from his throne, cried out in alarm and by gestures and tones besought me not to produce a second explosion in the fire.

"'I had won my point. The monkey-men had no desire for another demonstration of my terrifying magic, and without hindrance, I left the cavern and reached my own room. I was quite tired, and throwing myself upon my pile of palm leaves, I did not awaken until Mumba arrived with my evening meal. I slept well that night and, after a good breakfast and another lesson in the monkey-man tongue with Mumba, I started out, determined to explore the passage to the valley.

"'Few people were in the main cavern and those greeted me in rather friendly fashion. I crossed the huge room without trouble and entered the dark tunnel, whence I had seen the people come with their loads of fruit from the valley.

"'It was narrow and inky black, and in many places sloped steeply down, but there were no side passages to confuse me. At last I saw light ahead and in a moment more looked from the outlet of the passageway across the sunlit valley. Before me was a steep pile of broken debris that sloped for fifty feet or more to the brush below, and scrambling down this, I stood at the base of the lofty cliff and under the nearest of the scarlet trees. Elated at being out of the caves and in the open once more, and feeling sure I was not a prisoner under restraint, I stepped forward to explore the valley.

"'But before I had gone a dozen yards there was a rustle in the foliage above me, and glancing up, I saw a black face peering at me. The next moment a huge monkey-man dropped to the ground before me, barring my way and signed that I was to go no farther. Anxious to see if he was determined to stop me, I turned and started in another direction, but instantly the savage again halted me. It was no use. I was a prisoner after

all and would not be permitted to wander more than a dozen yards from the tunnel opening.

" 'Discouraged, I turned back, and I noticed that the brute appeared satisfied and once more leaped into the tree to resume his vigil. But even the restricted liberty allowed me was most welcome. Throwing myself upon the grass under the trees, I gave myself up to enjoyment of the fresh air and soft breeze, listening to the chirping of insects and the notes of birds, and striving to be as cheerful and contented as I could under the circumstances. I had only been in the valley two days, yet it seemed like weeks or months, and I realized that it behooved me to keep some sort of record of time.

" 'I could, of course, have written down each day in my note book, but the paper was far too valuable for sketching to permit me to do that and I busied my brain in an endeavor to think out some sort of calendar that would serve my purpose. At last I decided upon knotted strings. Each day I could tie a knot in a bit of fibre and at the end of seven days tie a knot twice the size of the others. Then, as long as I remembered that I had arrived on Wednesday the sixteenth, I could keep track of time without trouble. Having started my tally with a strip of flexible bark fibre by tying two knots in it, I decided to hunt for stone suitable for experimenting at arrowhead making.

" 'Searching among the fallen rocks soon convinced me that the material was not to be found there, as it was mainly soft limestone, or in some places a granitic rock. A little to one side, however, I found some pieces of a jasper-like material, which I judged would serve my purpose, and with these in my pocket, I started back for my quarters, anxious to keep mind and hands busy. Selecting a good sized piece of the rock, I placed it in the fire, turning it over and over with a stick until it was evenly heated. Then, raking the rock from the coals, I dipped a stick in my calabash of water and carefully let a drop fall upon one edge of the hot stone. Instantly there was a sharp click and a tiny flake of stone flew off. Drop after drop was placed along the edges of the rock and as each touched the hot surface and flakes snapped off, the pebble began to assume definite form. Over and over again I heated the stone and dropped water upon it, until at last I had the intense satisfaction of having fashioned a crude trowel-shaped object which might have served as a spear-head. The edges, however, were irregular and dull, but this was soon remedied by flaking first from one side and then the other until a keen cutting edge resulted. And then, when I was congratulating myself upon my success, a drop of water fell too far from the edge and with a sharp snap the stone broke squarely in two. It was a depressing accident. Then suddenly I broke into laughter to think how seriously I had taken the whole matter. Had my life depended upon it, I could not have lost myself more completely in the task.

" 'Practice, however, made me almost perfect in this art. My second attempt was a great improvement over my first; my third was even better, and by the time I had made a dozen, I felt that I was an accomplished master of arrowhead making. To be sure, no self respecting Indian of the stone age would have regarded the rough irregular things I had made as worthy of the name of either weapons or tools, but they were far superior to anything possessed by the monkey-men, and I had no need to feel ashamed of my prehistoric art. I was still admiring my handiwork, when Mumba arrived with my evening meal.

" 'Curious to test the efficiency of my stone implements, I selected the largest and sharpest of the lot and commenced carving one of the fruits. Instantly Mumba was all attention. To me the jagged thing was a poor makeshift for a knife, even for fruit, but to Mumba, who had never seen any edged tool except a natural sliver of rock, the implement was simply marvelous. I laughed heartily when I saw the fixed stare of wonder and awe upon his face, and handing him the flaked stone, I signalled for him to try it.

" 'As he half-fearfully took the bit of stone and tested its edge, he yelled with delight. He was like a small boy with his first jack-knife, and he leaped about trying it upon everything cuttable that he could find. He severed a bit of palm leaf with it, half-whittled and half-cut a stick of firewood, and when, accidentally, he cut his own finger and the blood flowed freely, he pranced and danced about with inexpressible joy. A moment before he had held only a tool, a wonderfully useful implement to be sure—but merely useful for peaceful purposes. But now he held a weapon, something far more valuable and his own injury was completely forgotten in his subsequent discovery.

" 'I had gone back several thousand years and was watching the reactions of the first human being to discover the use of stone weapons. Mumba was busy trying his wonderful gift for some time, and presently, anxious to exhibit it to his friends, he started for the door. But I was anxious to witness the reception it would receive from the populace, so, signing to him to slow down, I hurried with him to the main cavern.

" 'The king was nowhere about, but Mumba soon realized I wished to see him and hurried off, returning in a few moments with his ruler.

" 'I had taken along the rest of my crude implements, and their demonstration was received with gratifying interest and surprise on the king's part. I presented him with several of the things, and his delight was boundless as he hacked and whittled at sticks and gloated over the results, as pleased as a child with a new toy.

" 'Anxious to show the king and his subjects how useful the new tools would prove for skinning and cutting up game, I drew a rude sketch of an agouti, and summoning Mumba, tried to convey the idea that I wanted one of the creatures brought to me. At first he merely grinned and repeated the word "Ikki," evidently thinking I wanted to learn the agouti's name. But presently, as I pointed first at my sketch and then at the stone tools, he grasped the idea and dashed off. When he reappeared, he was carrying a dead agouti and as the king and his subjects looked on in wonder, I proceeded to skin the beast with a stone knife. It was hard, slow work, but to the monkey-men it seemed nothing short of a miracle. After I had partly skinned the creature, I beckoned to the king to try his hand. To me, accustomed to steel implements, the stone seemed hopelessly dull and almost useless. But to the black monarch, who had never known any sort of real edged tool, the blunt stone affair was a marvel, and with astonishing rapidity, he skinned and cut up the animal. So interested and delighted were the people, that I then and there started to show them how they could make stone tools and weapons for themselves. As I heated pebbles and chipped them into form, the people squatted about absolutely fascinated.

" 'But when, chuckling, I passed the calabash of water, the stick and the hot stones to the king, I roared with laughter at the expression on his face. No doubt he feared my magic might injure him, but he was no coward at heart and with a look of grim determination to do or die, he took the proffered stick, dipped it gingerly into the water and allowed a drop to fall on the stone. Then, as the chip flew off, he leaped to his feet and yelled with glee. And I soon discovered that stone implement making was primarily and most distinctly a savage art. The very first efforts of the monkey-men gave better results than anything I had achieved, and I had to concede that when

it came to a matter of stone working, the primitive cave dwellers were far superior to civilized man. I had pushed the monkey-men ahead for several centuries on the road to civilization and I decided that before I left them—unless my freedom was far nearer than I had reason to believe, I would push them along for several thousand years further towards a savage culture.

CHAPTER IV

"'HENCE, as the days passed and drew into weeks, and I still remained a virtual prisoner of the monkey-men I devoted much of my time to teaching my captors new arts and accomplishments.

"'Impatient and anxious as I was to escape from the Valley, I found that I was unconsciously becoming accustomed to my life among the monkey-men, and was finding a real interest in teaching the primitive race. I had long ago given up all hopes of escape, until the savages saw fit to let me go, for every time I descended from the caves, I was kept within a restricted area. Once, in fact, when I decided to test the matter, and disregarded the guard's warning to turn back, the fellow picked me up bodily and carried me back to the tunnel, where he released me.

"'Very soon, too, I found it impossible to go even a few steps into the valley. A heavy rain began to fall steadily, the lake at the top of the cliff rose and poured into the valley in a roaring cataract, and the whole valley was transformed into a shallow lake with the scarlet trees rising above the surface of the water. This solved the puzzle as to why the savages had developed their strange habit of traveling through the tree-tops. The valley, for several months of the year, was utterly impassable on foot, but the tree tops always afforded a safe and easy route. Undoubtedly, through countless centuries, the people had developed their arboreal habits through sheer necessity of going about at all times of the year. Very often I became quite down-hearted at the thought of passing the remainder of my days among the monkey-men, but I always forced myself to give up such morbid thoughts. And my lot, after all, was not so bad. I was healthy, unharmed, with plenty to eat, and as long as I was alive and well there was always hope.

"'So, making the best of my plight, I busied myself, as I have said, in trying to improve the lives and conditions of the tribe, and to mastering their language.

"'Already I had acquired a sufficient knowledge of the dialect to make my simple wants known and to understand an ordinary conversation. The monkey-men had also made rapid strides since they had first learned to make stone implements, for with the acquisition of fairly sharp edged tools and weapons, a wonderful vista of possibilities had opened to them, and things they had never dreamed of were now readily accomplished. Wooden slabs had replaced the leaves for dishes; the skins of animals, which formerly had been torn or hacked to pieces in removing them from the flesh, could now be removed entire and were used for many purposes. Sticks and limbs from trees could now be cut and shaped, whereas formerly, fire had been the only means the savages possessed for cutting wood. Partly to amuse myself and partly to become expert in their use, I had patiently worked at making myself a bow and several arrows. In doing this, I used my knife, of course, but I was careful not to let the monkey-men see the instrument, always pretending to scrape and whittle with a stone tool whenever Mumba appeared. Excellent mimics that they were, the monkey-men had no sooner seen my weapons in use than they, too, began making bows and arrows. With these, they found, they could secure larger and more wary game than with their blow guns; the aptitude they showed in using the weapons was remarkable. In fact, they were very much my masters in archery, despite the fact that I had practised constantly long before the first monkey-man's bow was completed. Also, I had taught them to make wooden handles for their stone tools, and fearing I would exhaust my supply of paper, I had taught them to draw rude figures with charred sticks on the walls of the caves. Several times, however, serious trouble had been narrowly averted. Although the people still regarded me with superstitious awe and respect, yet the king was madly jealous of my prestige. At first the mere threat of a second explosion was enough to bring him to terms, but after a time he had overcome his dread of this, and, on one occasion he demanded that I should give him my note book. And when I refused and threatened to produce the terrifying magic of the fire, the king had flown into a rage and had ordered one of his men to take the book from me by force. For the fraction of a second, the fellow hesitated to obey and in that second I had tossed three of my cartridges into the fire. The series of explosions that followed and thundered through the cavern had caused a perfect panic and had won the day.

"'But my supply of cartridges was even more limited than my stock of paper, and realizing I must eventually rely upon other means for impressing the king and his subjects, I kept my brains busy trying to think of some new stunt. Then one day I had an inspiration and I marveled that the idea had not occurred to me sooner. I ran across a useless water-ruined match in one of my pockets, and instantly I thought of making fire by means of flint and steel. The only trouble was I had neither flint nor steel. My only steel available was my precious knife, which I dared not injure by such use, and the nearest approach to flint was the jasper-like rock used for making stone implements.

"'However, if I was to work this new magic, I must take some risks, and I felt sure that somewhere I could find a stone that would serve in place of flint. Picking up several of the discarded stone implements, I tested each in turn by striking them with the back of the larger blade of my knife. Some gave no sparks whatever, one or two produced sparks which I knew were far too small to ignite any tinder, but at last I found a bit of quartz which gave rise to a shower of bright hot sparks from steel. The next and most important matter was to secure some tinder which could be ignited by means of my sparks. I racked my brains trying to think of some highly inflammable material. I had often seen flint and steel used both by Indians and Latin Americans, but for the life of me I could not remember what tinder had been employed. Then I kicked myself for a stupid ass, as I remembered the every-day flint and steel affairs used throughout South America and in which a braided cotton wick served as tinder. Not only was there an abundance of cotton in the valley, but I possessed quite a stock of the material in my own ragged garments.

"'To ravel out some of the threads and to braid these into a loosely stranded cord or wick was a simple matter. But to my utter disappointment, the cotton could not be ignited by the sparks. I was about to give up in despair and decided that the cotton was either the wrong kind or else that the natives treated theirs with some chemical, when I bethought myself of testing whether my cotton wick would actually burn. I touched it to the flames of my fire and it blazed up quite brightly. I extinguished it by placing my heel upon it, and sat pondering upon the reason for my

failure. Possibly, I thought, the cotton had been slightly damp, too damp to ignite by means of sparks, though dry enough to burn with the flame. In that case, perhaps the heat of its blaze had dried it and it would be well to have another try.

"'Holding the bit of charred cotton under the quartz, I struck the stone with the knife and the next moment gave vent to an involuntary shout of triumph. The cotton was glowing like a live coal, and by blowing upon it and placing some shreds of palm leaves against it, I soon had a blaze going. Over and over again I ignited the cotton, wondering why I had failed at first, until I discovered that while charred cotton could be ignited, the unburned fibre could not. I wondered what I would have done, or what any man would do, if no fire was available for charring the tinder. But that was a contingency that did not interest me at the time, and I was fully satisfied at having discovered how to produce fire by flint and steel. In fact, I was quite pleased to know that ordinary cotton could not be ignited, for it would make my magic all the more marvelous if, at any time, the king or one of his subjects should get hold of my fire-making apparatus by force.

"'I was very anxious, of course, to test the effect of my discovery upon the king and the others, but I decided that the wise course was to keep it up my sleeve, so to speak, for use in case of an emergency. And little did I dream how soon that emergency would arise.

"'That same night I was awakened by some slight and unusual sound, and opening my eyes without moving—a habit that had become second nature during long years in the bush—I glanced about, expecting to see Mumba. The next instant some one leaped upon me. I was seized and bound, and although I struggled frantically, I was utterly helpless in the grip of my assailant. Then a stick was thrust into the fire and as its blaze illuminated the room, I saw two monkey-men and the hideous old king gloating over me.

"'The monarch had decided to do away with me in secret. Why he had not killed me out of hand while I slept, instead of having me trussed up like a fowl, was a puzzle. But the next moment the question was answered. Holding the blazing firebrand for a torch, the king began searching the pockets of my clothing. Chuckling to himself, he drew out the cartridges and my note book, tossed the burning stick into the fire, and with a derisive laugh rushed off with his fellows, leaving me helpless and raging at my loss. I understood it all. He had repeatedly seen me reach into my pocket for the book; he must have been keen enough to notice that I took something from my pocket when I caused the explosions, and he had reasoned that by possessing himself of my magic-making device, he could perform the same miracles himself. That he had not also secured my knife was merely accident for it had been in my watch-pocket, and the king had only searched those pockets wherein he had seen me place my hands. He had overlooked one cartridge as well, but there was small comfort in this. No doubt, I thought, as soon as he had impressed his subjects with his own power, he would have me done away with, and it was the thought of how he might do it, rather than my death, that troubled me. Suddenly, my disquieting thoughts were interrupted by the muffled roar of an explosion from the direction of the main cavern. The king certainly was not losing any time. Then I heard running footsteps and knew my execution was close at hand.

"'The next instant Mumba leaped into the room, and muttering incoherently, quickly loosed my bonds. Hardly waiting to thank him, I seized my bow and arrows and dashed down the passage after Mumba, thoroughly enraged and determined to have a shot at the king before I was again overpowered. As I neared the cave, a low, moaning wail came from within, and as I reached the entrance I halted in my tracks. The place was thick with dense smoke and reeked with the odor of gunpowder, while every occupant was prone upon the floor. The king was nowhere to be seen, and I glanced about in an effort to locate the old thief. Mumba was tugging at my sleeve, jabbering excitedly, and urging me forward. Unable to understand what he wanted, I stepped forward among the prostrate savages. The next instant, a cry of amazement burst from my lips.

"'Sprawled upon the floor, with arms outstretched, lay the king, his ugly features ghastly with blood, while from what had once been his right eye, the ragged fragments of a brass cartridge shell protruded.

"'He was dead. Killed by his own act. One of the shells had been hurled from the fire by the explosion and had buried itself in his brain. No doubt he had bent close to the fire, as he tossed the cartridges into the flames, and the exploding gunpowder had done the rest.

"'For a brief moment I hesitated. Then, stooping quickly, I snatched the crown of Waupona feathers from the dead man's head, and placing it on my own, stepped to the throne. An instant later the prostrate people timidly raised their eyes and looked about. When they saw me seated upon the throne, with the royal crown upon my head, a mighty shout arose. Then they caught sight of their dead monarch, and with one impulse, they knocked their foreheads upon the floor. Here indeed was magic; something most awful. They had seen their king throw the cartridges into the fire. The terrible noise and the flying embers had followed, and now the monarch was dead and the white man, materializing from nowhere, was seated upon the throne wearing the royal crown. Truly the magic of such things was not to be trifled with, and cautiously raising their heads, the monkey-men gazed upon me as though I were an apparition born of the explosions—as they no doubt believed me to be. For a moment I sat motionless, gazing severely upon the people. Then, taking out my flint and knife and tinder, I struck a shower of sparks from the quartz and as the cotton glowed and the bits of palm leaf burst into a blaze, I waved them impressively before my face. It was the finishing touch to a most dramatic scene, and once more the wailing moan arose and the terrified, awe-stricken people prostrated themselves again.

"'The king was dead, long live the king!

"'With savage callousness the monkey-men paid little heed to their late monarch, whose body remained sprawled where it had fallen. But at an order from me, two of the fellows half-carried and half-dragged it into one of the dark holes in the wall. Mumba, meanwhile, was squatted beside my throne, gazing at me with absolute adoration on his good-natured but ugly face. He was a faithful fellow and had proved himself my true friend, and I decided it was time he was rewarded.

"'So by signs and what I knew of the language, I told Mumba to rise and made it clear to him and to the others that he was second in position to myself—my Prime Minister, in fact. For a time he did not seem able to grasp the idea, but when it finally dawned upon him, he fell at my feet, and then, rising, went strutting about and gabbling to his fellows in such an exalted supercilious manner that I fairly roared with laughter, despite my supposed dignity as a king.

"'A moment later, he seized two men, and dragging the evidently terrified fellows with him, approached

me and by signs and words informed me that they had aided and abetted the late ruler in his attack upon me. Apparently Mumba felt that his position as Prime Minister carried with it the duties of Chief of Police. It was evident that his two prisoners expected to receive prompt and terrible punishment. After all, I thought, they were very likely blameless, for the king's word was law, and to refuse would have meant death. Moreover, if they had been brave enough to help seize and bind me, even at their king's orders, they would, no doubt, prove brave and loyal to me. So, using Mumba as an interpreter, I pardoned the fellows and set them free. The crowd received the verdict with shouts of approval and the two fellows fairly grovelled at my feet.

"'It was now past midnight, so I dismissed the crowd and returned to my own quarters, followed by Mumba. Tired out with the exciting events of the night I threw myself upon my rude bed, and feeling perfectly secure, with Mumba curled up like a watchful dog in the doorway, I fell off to sleep.

"'The whole affair seemed dream-like and unreal when I awoke the next day. But there was the royal crown, and somehow I felt happier and more free from worry than at any time since I had been taken prisoner. I no longer had the king to fear, and being king myself, I felt sure I would not be under any restraint. In fact, I could leave the valley at any time—provided I could find a means of doing so, as soon as the rains ceased and the place became passable again.

"'All during my breakfast, my thoughts were concentrated on the chances of escaping. To scale the cliffs was, I knew, impossible. Moreover, to tramp alone through the jungle, wandering aimlessly in the forest in the hopes of eventually finding friendly Indians or natives, would be suicidal. I had no firearms; no white man can subsist on the game or products found in the tropical bush, and I could not hope to carry enough food to keep me any length of time. No, if I was to escape, it must be *via* the river. Somewhere the stream must flow out of the valley, and if I could construct a canoe or raft I might be able to float to civilization; perhaps even to the coast. But there was the ever-present danger of rapids and falls; I had no tools for boat-building, and even to construct a raft by means of my pocket knife and stone tools would be a Herculean task.

"'Moreover, long before I could dream of setting out—assuming I did manage to rig up some makeshift craft, I would have to provide an equipment and a supply of food that would last for a considerable period. And before I attempted anything at all, it behooved me to learn more of the river and its outlet. But that was simple now, for I could go about as I chose, and as the rains were now decreasing and the valley was drying, my explorations need not be delayed much longer.

"'For the immediate present I decided to thoroughly explore the caves, and with Mumba at my side, I started off. He seemed to know every turn and twist of the passages and every room or cavern in the whole labyrinthine place, and he guided me everywhere.

"'In one large chamber, I came upon the ex-king's family and harem. They did not appear in the least sorrowful over the demise of their lord and master, and all bowed down and prostrated themselves before their new ruler. It was apparently the custom of the monkey-men for a new king to assume all the duties and obligations of his predecessor, and Mumba explained that I was expected to take over the entire family and the dead king's lady friends.

"'At this I demurred, much to the amazement of both Mumba and the bereaved household; but since there was no thought of questioning a king's decision and since they could not understand such a superior being as myself, they said nothing; still the innumerable widows and their progeny set up a doleful wail as I left them, apparently deeply grieved and disappointed because they were condemned to remain without a royal head to the family.

"'Having thoroughly toured the caves, I wandered through the tunnel to the valley. The water had receded rapidly, and I managed to walk a considerable distance by choosing the higher ground. Almost unconsciously my steps took me towards the spot where we had first entered the valley. And very fortunate it proved that Fate led me that way. Searching about, I soon found the whitened skeletons of my Indian friends. Evidently their bodies had been left where they fell, and while some bones were missing and I could not find one skull—they had been washed away or had been carried off by some beast or bird—I could identify each skeleton, as in my mind I reconstructed the tragedy that had taken place so long before. I would have liked to bury the remains, but that was impossible, and the best I could do was to gather the bones together, place them in one pile and cover them with stones from the nearby river bed. Wondering, no doubt, what it was all about, Mumba aided me. Then I remembered the two who had fallen from the ladder and decided to add their bones to the little mound. The bones, badly broken, were there at the foot of the precipice, and as I stooped to pick them up, an involuntary exclamation of delight escaped me. Lying beneath José's skeleton, rusty and corroded but still serviceable, was the poor fellow's prized machete. To me it was more precious than gold or diamonds. A thousand things not possible before would now be easy. With the keen-bladed, heavy implement I could hew down trees, could build a raft, might even essay the construction of a canoe. With it in my hand I felt like a new man. Whirling it about, I shouted and laughed until Mumba, thinking I had gone mad, hurried off to a safe distance and squatted ready to spring into a tree at any instant. But, when to try its corroded edge, I hacked with it at a shrub and the steel, dull as it was, sheared through the stout stems, Mumba looked on with wide-eyed wonder and gave vent to strange animal-like grunts of absolute amazement.

"'I felt more confident, more hopeful than at any time since I had been in the valley. Even my gun, had I been able to find it, would not have been so welcome as the rusty machete, for with but one remaining cartridge, my gun was a useless thing, whereas with a machete I felt equal to any emergency.

CHAPTER V

"'IT was a few days after my discovery of the machete that I started out to make as thorough an exploration of the valley as possible. The rains had now ceased, the sun shone brightly, and with the exception of a pool here and there, the valley was again dry land. The river, however, still flowed in a turgid flood, and I knew that the rains in the higher lands about the valley were still falling. Accompanied by Mumba, as always, I wandered down the valley, following the general course of the river and expecting to find a narrow canyon or rift in the walls through which the stream flowed. Such an exit would have been as good a barrier as a precipice, as far as the monkey-men were concerned, for of course they had no knowledge of boats and hence could not have issued from their restricted habitat *via* the river. But I was doomed to bitter disappointment. When I at last came within sight of the rock cliffs that formed the lower

end of the valley, I saw that the river flowed directly against the surface of the precipice and vanished within a yawning black hole that pierced the base of the cliff. That seemed to settle it. I was as much a prisoner as though I had been surrounded by steel and concrete walls, and sick at heart, I felt that I was doomed to spend the rest of my life in the valley of the monkey-men. There was but one ray of hope left. On the opposite side of the valley there might be some spot where it would be possible to scale the walls. But to reach the further side I soon found was impossible. I must cross the river, and the current was far too swift, too treacherous and too dangerous for me to attempt to swim it. My previous experience in the river had been quite enough. Moreover, I discovered that not a monkey-man knew how to swim, and hence none of the tribe had ever been beyond the river. This encouraged me in a way, for I reasoned that if the stream barred them effectually, as it did, there might be an easy means of escape on the further side of the valley. The more I thought of it the more determined I became to find out what lay beyond the river, and the idea of bridging it occurred to me. It may sound like a very simple matter to speak of building a bridge across a narrow river, where plenty of large trees are available. And under ordinary circumstances it would not have been a difficult feat. But if you consider that my only serviceable tool was a much worn machete, and that the savages had never learned to cut down trees, had never seen or heard of a bridge, and were filled with unreasoning, superstitious dread of crossing the river, the difficulties before me may be somewhat appreciated.

"'Weeks elapsed before the crude bridge was in place. I was forced to make numerous stone axes to supplement my machete, to teach the savages how to fell trees, how to use rollers and levers, and in fact instruct them in the simplest and most elementary principles of mechanics, before any real work was attempted. I soon found it easier to burn down the trees than to cut them, and after incalculable labor I was rewarded with several long, strong, tree trunks ready for use on the river bank at the narrowest portion of the stream. The next question was to place the logs across from shore to shore. To solve this problem cost me many hours of anxious thought and an immense amount of labor.

"'At last we erected a pair of 'shears' of strong logs bound together with vines, which were raised above the logs at the very brink of the river. A crude sheave, made by slinging a roller of wood in two loops of liana rope, served as a pulley, and by passing a stout liana over this, and by the gigantic ape-like men hauling on it, one end of the largest log was raised high in air. The rope was then made fast, the crowd of willing and powerful blacks lifted and pushed the butt end forward, and at last the log stood almost erect. So delighted were the savages when they saw this seemingly impossible feat accomplished, that they almost ruined everything by releasing their holds on the lines in order to dance and shout with triumph. But I managed to save the day by getting a quick turn around one of the shear-legs in the nick of time.

"'When the hilarious monkey-men were once more under control, I directed them to lift the butt-end of the suspended log and push it forward until at last it stood erect with one end resting on the nearest bank and the other towering twenty feet or more above the shears. Stout stakes were then driven into the earth behind the log to prevent its slipping back; it was lashed loosely to these so it could not kick up, and while my subjects looked on in wonder, I cut the rope. With a tremendous crash it fell, with its top resting on the further bank of the river. The delight of the savages at sight of the log bridge was wonderful. They yelled and shouted, pranced and leaped about, rolled on the grass and roared with glee. Then, like a crowd of school children on a holiday, they raced across the bridge which, to their feet, formed a safe and easy roadway. Never in the history of their race had any member of the tribe crossed the river, and now that the stream was spanned, they frolicked on the farther shore, entirely forgetting their former superstitious fears of the place.

"'The monkey-men might be perfectly satisfied with a single round log for a bridge, but it was far from satisfactory for my purpose, although I managed, with considerable difficulty to crawl across. I forced the savages to abandon their merrymaking and place a second log along side the first. By nightfall, a good substantial bridge had been completed and the opposite side of the valley was opened to me.

"'On the following day I crossed with Mumba, several of the monkey-men trailing behind, and started on my explorations. This side of the valley was far richer in natural resources than the other, for its wild life, fruits and vegetables had never been touched by man. Deer, tapir, peccaries and other creatures were abundant; curassows and pheasants abounded, and several times I saw the royal purple Wauponas, at sight of which Mumba and his fellows always prostrated themselves. It was such a pleasant, interesting district that I did not feel greatly depressed even when I found that there was no chance of ascending the cliffs. And it was while I was examining the rocky walls, searching for a possible slope up which I might climb, that I made a very interesting discovery. I had come upon a new rock, almost as clear as glass, which I felt sure would lend itself to making very superior stone implements, and I was gathering up a number of the best pieces, when I noticed a bit of stone of a semi-transparent green color. It was so much like a bit of a broken bottle that at first I mistook it for a fragment of glass and my heart gave an extra beat at thought that some white man had visited the valley before me. But as I picked the fragment up and examined it, I realized that it was a natural formation, a splinter from a regular crystal. Then suddenly it dawned upon me. It was an emerald, a bit of gem worth several hundred dollars in the markets of the world, but to me, a prisoner in the valley of the monkey-men, worth less than the flakes of common quartz. I laughed derisively as I thought of it, and was on the point of hurling the precious bit of green against the cliff, when common sense returned to me. Suppose I should escape from the valley? For, despite the apparent hopelessness of my plight, I had not given up hope. If I did get away, the emerald would go far towards making my way easier; it might even stand between me and starvation, for until I could reach civilization and draw upon my resources, I would be penniless, absolutely destitute. But throughout the land, even in the most remote villages, the green gem would be negotiable. Thus thinking, I pocketed the emerald, and with renewed interest began searching for more. I was well rewarded. Among the debris, crystals and portions of crystals were everywhere, and rapidly I scratched and dug among the fallen rock and gathered the green mineral, while Mumba, seeing what I was after, fell to and secured twice as many as I found myself. But the supply was limited. The emeralds had obviously been brought down by a landslide from some pocket or vein far up on the precipice, and longingly I gazed up, trying to locate the spot and wondering what incalculable fortunes might still lie in the cliffside. Even the gems I had were enough to keep

me in comfort for a long time—provided I ever escaped, and I found no little pleasure and amusement in speculating on how I would spend my fortune, if ever I did reach civilization.

"'For several days thereafter I roamed the valley, hoping against hope to discover some exit I had overlooked before. Each day, too, the river fell and its current decreased, and I noticed that the stream no longer filled its tunnel through the cliff at the lower end of the valley. Above the water there now showed an opening several feet in height and fifty feet or more in width, and it was this aperture which finally gave me the idea that seemed the only possible solution to my dilemma. Would it not be feasible to escape through this tunnel? To be sure, such a venture would be perilous in the extreme. I would be entering an unknown Stygian passage, which might very well prove a trap.

"'For all I knew the tunnel might narrow or decrease in height so as to be filled with the racing water. At one or a hundred spots jagged rocks might bar the way. Somewhere within the cliff there might be falls or rapids, or even if none of these menaces existed within the rocky wall, the stream might dash over a precipice or flow in terrific rapids where it emerged on the farther side. And I had no means of knowing how long the tunnel might be. The river might flow under ground for miles, or again the passage might be less than fifty feet in length. All of this I pondered upon and I knew that to go blindly at it would be worse than suicidal. But gradually, as I gave thought to the idea and it grew in my mind, I began to formulate plans to learn something definite regarding the tunnel and the stream before thinking seriously of attempting to escape by river. It was a very simple matter, once it came to my mind, and without delay I set about putting it into practice. With this end in view, I constructed a miniature raft, and attaching a long coil of vine rope to this, I allowed it to float into the tunnel. Rapidly the line paid out as the raft vanished within the aperture in the rock until nearly two hundred feet had slipped smoothly and without jerk or interruption through my fingers. Evidently there were no rapids, falls nor reefs for that distance within the passage.

"'But I wanted also to be sure if the space between water and roof remained constant, and whether or not the tunnel widened or grew more narrow. I soon hit upon a plan for determining these points. Cutting a number of stocks, I fastened them upright, like masts, in my little raft and cut them at varying lengths, the longest nearly five feet in length, the shortest barely a foot in length. Then, across the affair, I lightly bound slender sticks of varying lengths and again allowed my test raft to float into the passage, knowing that when I drew it out again the condition of the sticks would be a fairly accurate record of the conditions of the passage. And to my delight, when the raft was withdrawn, I found only one of the upright sticks broken, and that the longest, while not one of the horizontal sticks was injured or missing. Assured that the cavern roof was at least four feet above the water for fully two hundred feet from the entrance, and that it was nowhere less than ten feet in width, I decided to make a personal inspection of the place. To do this would necessitate building a raft large enough to float me, and several days were consumed in this work and in gathering a tremendous amount of lianas for rope, for I intended to penetrate far beyond the two hundred foot limit on my explorations.

"'Fortunately there were plenty of the light balsa or trumpet-trees in the valley, and building a raft was a comparatively easy feat. But to the monkey-men it savored of magic and witchcraft. And when they saw the crude affair bobbing on the water, and saw their king step aboard and drift down stream, they became absolutely terrified and beat their breasts and wailed, evidently thinking their white monarch was about to leave them forever.

"'It was with great difficulty that I reassured them, and, running the raft ashore, disembarked. But it was still more difficult to force them to permit me to board the raft once more, and I knew that I would have my hands more than full if I attempted to enter the tunnel. In that case, they would assuredly feel I was deserting them, and despite my impatience, I knew that I would have to postpone my investigations until they became accoustomed to seeing me navigate the river. Hence, for the next day or two, I made daily trips down stream upon my raft, each day approaching nearer and nearer my goal, and as the novelty wore off and the savages learned by experience that I always came ashore again, they began to look upon my inexplicable occupation as a regular thing and quite to be expected. But try as I might, I could not induce one of them—not even Mumba himself, to set foot aboard the raft. It was on one of these short voyages that I made another discovery which, had I been other than a virtual prisoner, would have filled me or any other man with excitement and delight. The raft had grounded upon a sand bar, and in order to get it free, I was forced to move several good sized cobbles. In doing this I caught an unmistakable yellow gleam among the fine black sand in the recess left by the stone. Forgetting everything, forgetting my state, my surroundings, even plans for my escape, I dropped to my knees and dug feverishly with fast beating heart in the gravel. The next moment, with almost bated breath, I was gloating over an immense gold nugget, weighing fully ten pounds. Rapidly, with machete and hands, I dug away the sand, stopping every few moments to secure a rough yellow nodule, until my first excitement was exhausted and common sense returned. I sat back and roared with delirious laughter. I was still a prisoner of the monkey-men's valley and all the gold in the world was of no slightest value to me until I could be sure of escaping. But, like the emeralds, the gold, if I ever left the place, would be riches, and I determined that before I made any attempt to get away, I would lay in a good supply of the precious metal.

"'It was two days after this strike that I decided to attempt my long deferred exploration of the subterranean stream. It was with the utmost difficulty that I made the monkey-men understand what I wished them to do. In fact, Mumba, who by constant association with me could grasp my meaning more quickly than the others, and who, by the way, was far more intelligent than his fellows, was the only one who really understood my desires. I had not over much confidence in him, and yet, in a way, my life depended upon his and his companions' carrying out my orders. I quite fully appreciated the fact that I was taking a tremendous risk, but my mind was made up. I would penetrate the tunnel to the limit of my vine ropes, unless forced to give up before then, and I hoped at that distance to be able to see the further outlet to the place. I had already prepared torches of resinous gum, and equipped with several of these, I moored the raft close to the tunnel entrance and repeated my instructions to Mumba for the last time. A strong line had been made fast to the raft and to a stout stake driven into the earth, and fully five hundred feet of this lay coiled neatly on the bank. In addition, I had provided a light line to be used as a signal cord, and my great danger lay in the possibility that the primitive,

ape-like beings might confuse my signals or become panic-stricken and desert me, once I had vanished in the tunnel. However, I consoled myself with the thought that if worst came to worst, I could probably haul myself back to daylight, for the river's current was now very slight. By words and gestures and by a demonstration, I impressed my signals upon Mumba. One pull at the light line and heavy line was to be held fast; two pulls and more was to be let out, while three pulls meant to haul in. A bit fearful of what might lay before me, I lit my torch, stepped upon the raft, pushed it from shore, and ordered Mumba to pay out the line. The next instant, I floated in inky darkness, illuminated only by the ruddy glow from my torch. Steadily I drifted on, holding my torch aloft, moving it about, and peering into the shadows. But I found nothing that would impede my progress. The current remained constant, the roof and walls varied little in height or width, there were no jutting rocks or reefs, and the tunnel was nearly as straight as if it had been drilled by man. At last I reached the limits of my ropes, and still no glimmer of light ahead. The passage might continue so for miles for all I knew; yet the fact that it was navigable for such a considerable distance gave me much encouragement. Finding nothing to discover, I jerked three times on the signal line, and presently felt myself being hauled back whence I had come.

"'I have never seen more curious expressions on the faces of any human beings than those of the monkey-men, when I reappeared. They showed fear, awe, wonder and sadness combined, and all these gave way to triumphant, hilarious shouts when they realized that I had not vanished forever. It really affected me deeply to see how much my subjects thought of me, and I experienced a pang of regret and felt something of a scoundrel at the idea of deserting them. However, my mind was now firmly made up. I would steal down to the place before dawn, and taking my life in my hands, would attempt the passage of the tunnel as soon as I could complete necessary preparations. With the finding of the emeralds and the gold, and the thoughts of civilization and its comforts which would follow, longer imprisonment in the valley became intolerable. Better death in the subterranean stream than life in the valley among the ape-like people.

"'But my preparations could not be made in a day. In the first place, I decided that a raft would not serve my purpose. It was a cumbersome thing, ill adapted to running possible rapids, too heavy for one man to handle in swift water or to dislodge from a reef or bar, and, if I succeeded in passing through the mountain in safety, its progress would be very slow upon any stream I might descend. To build a boat would, I knew, be far too great an undertaking to consider, and even a dugout would be beyond me and my monkey-men laborers. But to construct a woodskin, such as I had often used and had frequently helped make in the forests of Guiana and Brazil, would be neither impossible nor very difficult. The main trouble would be to find a tree with bark that could be stripped from the trunk in one large cylindrical piece.

"'But fortune favored me. Trees very similar to the purple-heart grew here and there in the red-leaved forest, and a test proved that their bark was perfectly adapted to my requirements. Work was at once begun, and in due time I had a large tree felled, and by dint of painstaking work and with the aid of my priceless machete, I managed to wedge off a splendid section of the tough thick bark. The rest was comparatively simple. Spreaders of hard wood were easily cut and having nicked and bent the ends of the bark together, and having secured them in place with strips of a rattan-like vine, the spreaders were forced between the gunwales and my canoe was complete. Many a time two Indians and myself had constructed such a woodskin in a few hours, but here in the valley many days of laborious work had been required. The canoe, however, was a complete success. It floated buoyantly on the water, was steady and easily handled, and the monkey-men regarded it as another miracle. By now, however, they had become so accustomed to miracles that they gave them little heed; in fact, they were by this time so occupied with their own affairs, that it was often difficult for me to induce them to work for me. I had taught them many arts and crafts, and they had become most enthusiastic and interested in their new accomplishments. I had shown them how to spin and weave, for these purposes using the inner bark of the "Seda Virgin" or lace-bark tree which was as soft, tough and strong as silk.

"'They had already used the material for the bits of scanty loin-cloths they wore, but they had never discovered that it could be twisted or spun into thread and woven into coarse cloth or made into hammocks. The monkey-men took to the latter as ducks take to water, and everywhere the comfortable swinging beds had supplanted the piles of dried palm leaves in the savages' apartments. Fish hooks of bone and fishing lines of bark, had also been introduced and were in constant use, and I had taught the people to till the earth and raise vegetables instead of grubbing for them here and there. I had even succeeded in twisting or spinning the wild cotton and weaving it by hand and had spent many hours trying to devise and construct some sort of loom; this, however, I found beyond me. I had far greater success in making baskets, and once the monkey-men had learned the principle, they became adept basket makers. Pottery had followed the baskets, and every member of the tribe was well supplied with earthenware dishes, basket and high finished and well made stone tools, implements and weapons. Indeed, in practically all savage arts and industries, the monkey-men were now fully the equals of the ordinary primitive Indians of the country and were rapidly developing a culture of their own, for all I had to do was to start them on anything and they progressed rapidly, evolving and introducing many ideas and innovations themselves.

"'I have told all this as if it required little time, and I confess that time passed far more rapidly than I would have thought possible. I was really surprised, when I counted over my time strings, on the day my canoe was completed, to discover that I had been with the monkey-men for more than a year and that the second rainy season was rapidly approaching. If I was to escape by way of the river I must act promptly, because with the first heavy rains, the tunnel would be impassable for months. Fortunately I had few preparations to make. Ever since I had decided to attempt the passage, I had been gathering a supply of provisions in the shape of dried meat, tubers, roots and vegetables, and I now had enough to last me several weeks. My hammock, a bundle of dry sticks and leaves, my flint and tinder, my machete, my bow and arrows and several torches, completed my equipment. I was ready to set out at a moment's notice, but I was determined to secure more gold from my rich placer for, I reasoned, if I did reach civilization, it would be most welcome; if I failed, I would be no worse off with the gold than without it. And it was this determination that very nearly cost me my life.

"'When it actually came to the point of leaving, I felt not a little sad and depressed, for though I would never have believed it possible, I had become attached to the monkey-men and felt as if they were old friends

and my own people. I was particularly sorry to desert Mumba, and for a time I even considered taking him with me. But I realized that even if I could persuade him to embark in my canoe and attempt the tunnel passage—which I very much doubted—he would probably pine away and die of loneliness and homesickness, away from his people and among strangers.

"'And I found myself strangely excited and nervous as the hour for my secret departure approached. I slept little the night before and was up before dawn; and long before the sun rose I had my belongings stowed in my woodskin or bark canoe and was drifting down the river towards the bar where I had discovered the gold.

"'By the time I reached the spot, it was almost light, and drawing the bow of my craft on the bar, I set to work with my machete and a wooden hoe I had made. The place was far richer than I had imagined, and in nearly every handful of gravel and sand, which I washed and sifted in a basketwork tray and "panned" out in an earthenware basin, I found nuggets. No doubt the finer flakes and dust were even more abundant, but I could not spare the time to secure these, and contented myself with the larger lumps and nuggets of metal. So interested did I become in my labors that I did not realize how time was passing, until my attention was attracted by the loud rumbling of distant thunder. I was rather startled, for according to my calculations, the first heavy rains were not due for several days and thunder was most unusual except as an accompaniment to these first torrential downpours. Dawn, I noticed, was rapidly approaching; the eastern sky was already light, and I saw that the sky was overcast and that a bank of heavy black clouds hung low over the summit of the cliff at the opposite end of the valley. All this I noticed, and stopped to gather a last basketful of gravel, thinking to myself that with a few more nuggets I would be satisfied, for civilized man's greed at sight of gold is irresistible. Then another terrific crash of thunder echoed over the valley, reverberating from cliff to cliff. Startled, realizing that I must hurry if I was to get away before the storm broke, I shoved my canoe free from the bar, grasped my paddle, and headed down stream. It was fully two miles by the river from the bar to the tunnel, and before I had covered half the distance it was broad daylight. I noticed, too, that I seemed to be moving very swiftly, while the clouds had now spread until they covered half the sky, and peals of thunder and vivid flashes of lightning were frequent. Still I did not realize my peril, did not dream that the cloud-burst-like deluge would break for many hours, perhaps for several days.

"'Not until I was close to the yawning black hole was I aware that the rains must be falling with tropical violence in my rear, that on the highlands beyond the walls of the valley the storm was raging, and that the lake which fed the river had been flooded and was pouring its surplus water into the valley.

"'But as I saw the entrance to the tunnel before me I realized this and was panic stricken. But too late. Feverishly I plied my paddle and tried to guide my craft to shore, but all my efforts were futile. The river was rushing me forward, straight for the hole in the cliff, and its current held my frail canoe in the centre of the channel despite my utmost endeavors to swing it aside. My heart seemed to stand still; I felt sick and faint with terror as I saw that already the water filled the tunnel to within a yard of the arched roof. Certain death faced me, I felt sure. Long before I could traverse the passage the water would have risen until it filled the subterranean channel, and vainly I cursed myself and my insane cupidity which had delayed me.

"'All this happened in the fraction of a second. The next instant the black arch was above the dancing bow of my canoe. Scarcely aware of my action, I threw myself flat in the bottom of the woodskin, shot into the tunnel, and was enveloped in absolute darkness.

CHAPTER VI

"'TREMBLING, shaking, expecting at any moment to feel the water pouring over the gunwales of my canoe, to hear its sides grinding against the rock roof as the water rose, I lay there. Ages seemed to pass. There was not a glimmer of light; only the roar of rushing water filling the awful underground tunnel. Gradually, as the minutes passed and the canoe still dashed onward unharmed, I grew calmer. Perhaps the passage was higher inside than at the entrance. There was a chance that I might yet win through, borne on the first crest of the flood, and cautiously, I raised my paddle, expecting to feel it strike the roof above. But it met with no resistance, and encouraged, with new hope, I managed to light a torch and held it aloft. Barely discernible in the glow, I could see the walls of the tunnel, sparkling and glinting as the light was reflected from the crystalline rock, and fully ten feet above my head I saw the water-worn roof with its pendant stalactites. I breathed more easily. For the present I was in no real danger, and it seemed to me that the current was not as swift now.

"'But my canoe was gyrating wildly, swinging around and in imminent peril of capsizing or dashing against a wall or some submerged rock. Fixing my torch in the bow, I grasped my paddle and guided the canoe along the centre of the stream. Onward, ever onward I went. Often the river swept around sharp bends, and had the craft been left to itself, it most certainly would have been wrecked. Often, too, the tunnel became very narrow, but always there was ample space between my head and the roof, and gradually full confidence returned to me. Then, suddenly, swinging around a sharp curve, my greatest dread was realized. The roof lowered abruptly, and before me the foaming torrent seemed to completely fill the channel. Before I could cry out, the flaring torch struck the low-hung rock and was knocked overboard, and barely in time I ducked and threw myself prone in my canoe. This, I knew was the end. I would be drowned like a rat in a trap, and deeply, bitterly I regretted ever having left the valley of the monkey-men.

"'Again and again I felt the gunwales of my canoe bump against the roof above. Each time, as it grated against the rock and momentarily hesitated in its onward rush, my heart seemed to stop beating and I felt that all was over. Often, too, as the craft grated slowly along, water slopped over the sides and I lay there, sick, terrified, half-submerged in icy water, helpless, unable to rise, awaiting death. It was torture indescribable, agony beyond words, and then, just as I felt the canoe stopping, as the friction against the roof was too great for the current to overcome, the darkness suddenly vanished and the tunnel was filled with light. The next instant the canoe shot forward, and with dazed eyes I gazed up at a vast stretch of clear blue sky. I was saved; saved by the narrowest margin, for as I sat up, blinking and shaking, and glanced back, I saw the last few inches of the tunnel's mouth vanish in a mass of bubbling seething water.

"'With a mighty sigh of thankfulness and relief I looked about. I was floating on the surface of a broad stream into which the river from the valley emptied. On every side stretched the dark, dim aisles of heavy

forests, rich, green and cool, and I shouted aloud and cried at the welcome sight of so much greenery, of vine-draped trees with never a red leaf visible.

"'For hours I paddled and drifted down the stream, headed I knew not where, but content to know that I had escaped; that somewhere ahead lay the coast and civilization, and that before me—with good fortune and reasonable care—lay life and freedom among my fellow men. So anxious was I to put all possible distance between me and the valley I had left, that I did not even stop to eat ashore, but munched dried meat and fruit until well into the afternoon.

"'Then, overcome with weariness from my exertions and my excitement, I ran the woodskin ashore in a little cove sheltered by vines and brush, and making it fast, stepped into the forest. Within a dozen yards of shore I routed a small herd of peccaries, and with a lucky shot, brought down one of the beasts with my arrow. Soon a fire was blazing and I dined well on broiled pork and roast yams. Then, refreshed and sleepy, I threw myself in my hammock and instantly lost consciousness.

"'It was dark when I again awoke, and feeling thirsty, I stepped towards the river to secure a drink. As I reached the bank and stooped to secure a calabash from my canoe, my eyes caught sight of a faint glow far down the stream. For a brief moment I stared at it, puzzled. Then my somewhat sleep-befuddled mind cleared and I realized that it was the light from a fire. Some one was near, some sort of human beings were camped within a mile of where I stood. Were they friends or foes, Indians or white men? I had no idea where I was, how far from civilization, whether in an Indian country or in a district frequented by rubber gatherers or other natives. Those whose camp fire cast a ruddy glare upon the river might be white, black or red, and if the latter, they might be either friendly or hostile. Anxious as I was to meet a fellow human being, I knew I must be cautious. I must not run blindly into a camp of savages, who would kill me out of hand and perhaps feast on my body afterwards. But I was a skilled woodsman; I felt confident that I could approach the fire unseen and unheard, and if the campers were civilized or semi-civilized, I would land; if they appeared to be hostile Indians, I could drift on down stream, out of their way. Accordingly I silently unfastened my canoe, as silently stepped into it and grasped the paddle, and as noiselessly as one of the shadows along shore, I floated down towards the fire.

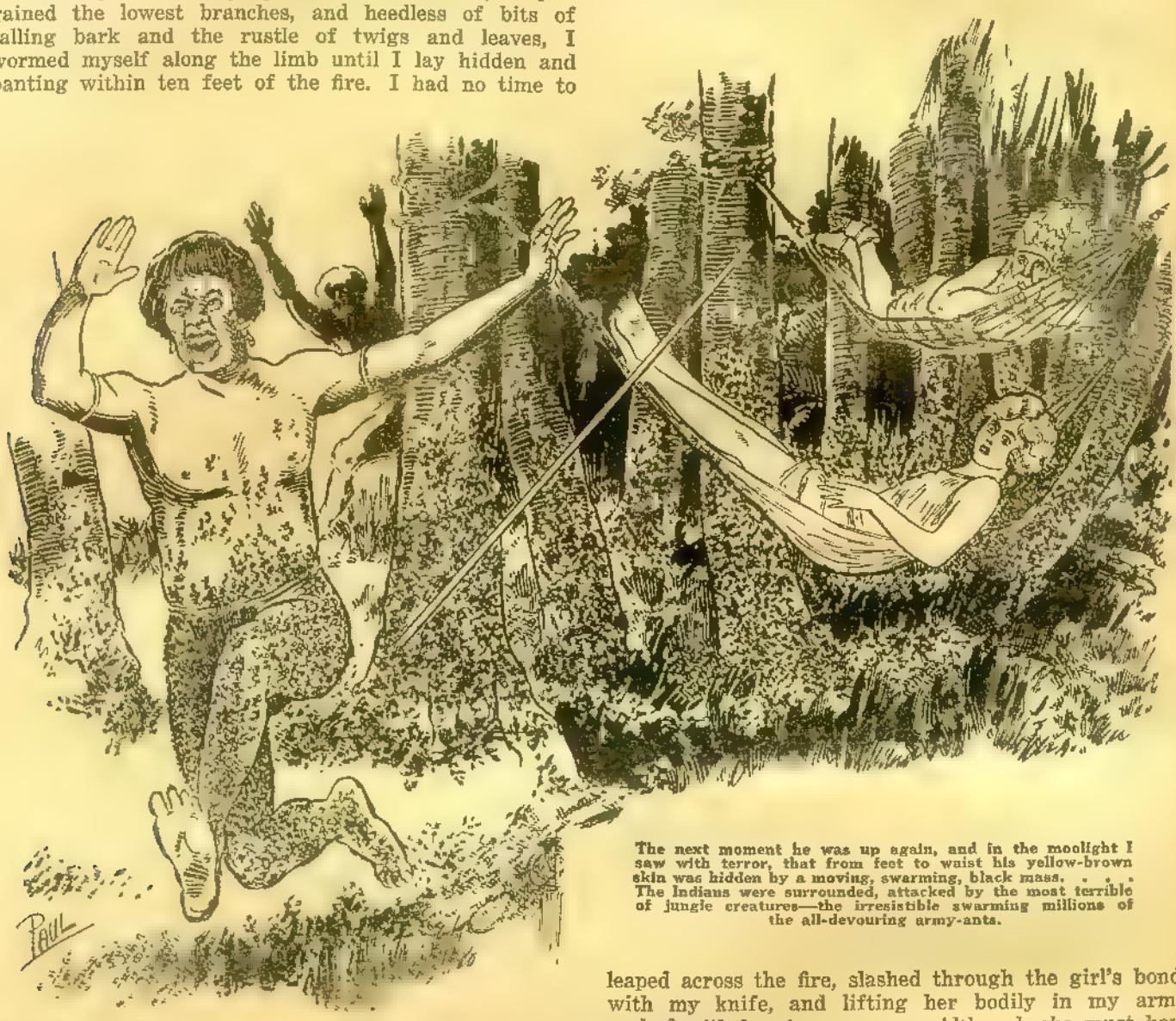
"'Keeping close to the opposite shore and in the heavy shadows of the jungle, I rapidly approached the light, until I dared go no further. Then, running my canoe close under the bank, I stepped ashore. Taking advantage of every tree trunk and clump of bamboos, I picked my way along until I was opposite the fire. As I came within sight of it, I gasped and stopped in my tracks, almost unable to believe my eyes. In a small opening in the forest blazed a large fire and gathered about it were four, naked, painted Indians armed with powerful bows and long arrows. But it was not these savages who had rivetted my attention, but a fifth figure. Bound to a small tree near the fire was a woman, a girl whose scantily-clad body and face, clearly visible by the fire light, were unmistakably white!

"'Who was she? What was she doing here, a captive of those fierce-visaged Indians? Even from the distance I could see that she was very beautiful and that her face showed no signs of fear, nothing but a resigned, hopeless expression, as she watched the Indians about the fire. That they were hostiles was obvious, and it was probable that they were also cannibals. My heart sickened as I realized that their lovely captive might soon furnish food to form a cannibal feast. My blood boiled while I gazed helplessly at the bound white girl and her painted captors. But what could I do to aid her? I was powerless against four armed savages. With a gun, even with a revolver, I might be foolhardy enough to attack them, counting on the surprise and the terror of firearms to win the day. But unarmed, except for an inferior bow and arrows, what chance had I? And then, suddenly, as I thought of fire-arms, I had an inspiration. Back to my mind flashed the memory of the consternation caused by my exploding cartridges among the monkey-men. I still had the one cartridge the king had overlooked when he had robbed me. If I could only approach closely enough to the fire to throw the shell into the flames, I might frighten the Indians into flight, and in the confusion, rescue the girl. Of course, it was a wild, hair-brained scheme with every chance against its success. Even if by craft and good luck I managed to come within reach of the fire, the odds were all against me. I might fail to throw the cartridge into the flames; it might not explode; the Indians might not be terrified, or they might recover from their fright before I could release the captive, or, even if they ran and I secured the girl, they might, and probably would, pursue us in canoes. But had they canoes? I had not noticed any, and I peered into every shadow and searched every hiding place along the shore without seeing a craft of any kind. No, I was convinced that I had nothing to fear on that score, and great as the risks were, I determined to take them.

"'Better far to lose my life in an effort to save the girl than to leave her in her sad plight and be haunted for the rest of my life with memory of her there. Quickly my plans were formed. Retracing my steps, I shoved my canoe from shore, paddled it silently up stream beyond range of the fire light, crossed quickly to the opposite shore, and allowed the woodskin to float down stream. Just above the fire, a small point of land jutted into the water, and here I moored my craft, fastening it to a paddle thrust into the soft mud, which could be withdrawn instantly. I was now so close that I could hear the voices of the Indians, and though they spoke in such low gutteral tones that I could not understand them, I recognized their speech as a dialect of the Myankos—the fiercest, most implacable cannibals of the South American jungles. But the discovery, although it confirmed my fears for the girl's fate, encouraged me. The Myankos were primitive, aloof, hostile, and were never in touch with civilized man. Hence the chances that the exploding cartridge would terrify them were greater. But in order to use the shell, I must reach the fire, and it seemed an impossible feat to do this, unseen and unheard. From across the river, however, I had taken note of every detail of the vicinity, and my long bush training served me well. At one side of the fire, and with its limbs extending almost over it, was a large mora tree, its squat trunk, wide spreading roots and tangled vines affording an easy means of ascent. If I could gain the shelter of the branches and worm my way out on a limb, I could almost drop the cartridge into the flames below. But to climb that tree without noise and without attracting the attention of the Indians, was, I knew, impossible.

"'But I had a scheme, which I prayed and hoped might serve me. Grasping two of my yams I crept into the shelter of the mora tree, and with a long breath and with all my strength, I hurled one of the yams into the black shadows of the jungle beyond the fire. Instantly, as the tuber crashed into the brush, the savages leaped to their feet, listened a moment, and then, grasp-

ing their ready weapons, three of them dashed towards the sound. Even the girl turned and stared towards the spot, while the fourth savage remained tense and expectant near the fire. The next instant the second yam crashed through the foliage and dropped with a splash into the water down stream. With a sharp cry, the fourth Indian rushed away, while the other three shouted and hurried in the same direction. Scarcely had the second yam left my hand when I was breathlessly scrambling up the tree trunk. Quickly I gained the lowest branches, and heedless of bits of falling bark and the rustle of twigs and leaves, I wormed myself along the limb until I lay hidden and panting within ten feet of the fire. I had no time to spare. Already the Indians were returning, muttering, puzzled; wondering what had caused the noises, and evidently nervous. They were superstitious, and no doubt constantly feared an attack from enemies, and the mysterious crashing of my yams had put their nerves on edge. The stage was set, the most hazardous part of my undertaking had been safely accomplished, and I felt that good fortune and a benign Providence were with me. Waiting until the Indians had gathered about the fire, I noiselessly took the cartridge from my pocket, opened my knife and held it in my teeth, and with fast beating heart and bated breath, and with a prayer to God, I tossed the shell into the very centre of the flames. At the sound of its striking and the little shower of sparks that flew up, the savages started and stared at the flames. But they evidently thought it merely a falling or snapping stick of firewood, and made no move to investigate. The next instant firebrands flew in every direction, a volcano seemed to erupt before the astounded eyes of the Myankos, and the roar of the exploding powder echoed through the vast silent forest. With wildly terrified yells, their already tense nerves shattered, and absolutely frightened out of their wits, the four Indians fled, screaming, into the jungle. Scarcely had the echoes of the detonation died down, and before the dense smoke had cleared—almost before the savages had dashed away—I dropped from my perch to the ground,



The next moment he was up again, and in the moonlight I saw with terror, that from feet to waist his yellow-brown skin was hidden by a moving, swarming, black mass. . . . The Indians were surrounded, attacked by the most terrible of jungle creatures—the irresistible swarming millions of the all-devouring army-ants.

leaped across the fire, slashed through the girl's bonds with my knife, and lifting her bodily in my arms, rushed with her to my canoe. Although she must have been terrified, despite the fact that I must have appeared to her like another savage with my long hair, my unkempt beard and my patched, ragged garments, she did not scream, did not struggle, and it was not until I had dropped her into my woodskin and had pushed from shore that I realized she was unconscious.

"'I had no time to lose. Already the Indians were recovering. I could hear their shouts coming nearer, and I was obliged to pass through the light of the remnants of the scattered fire and in plain view, if they returned to the scene.

"'Frantically I plied my paddle, keeping as far towards the opposite shore as possible, and aided by the current of the stream, I shot past the danger point. As my canoe vanished into the darkness beyond, a savage yell echoed from the rear, and a long poison-tipped arrow sang through the air and splashed into the water within a yard of us. But the next missile fell

far astern, the shouts grew fainter, and presently, feeling all danger over, I ceased my mad efforts, and panting for breath, let the canoe slip silently down the river.

"'The girl was now stirring, and presently she sat up and stared about. Seeing me in the stern of the canoe, she peered at me intently for a space, and then spoke in a strange dialect. I had expected to hear her utter words in Spanish. I should not have been unduly amazed had she spoken in French or English, but it was a surprise to hear her use a tongue that was evidently Indian. But undoubtedly she thought me an Indian. I spoke to her in English and in Spanish and even managed a few words in Patois French, but evidently they were as unintelligible to her as her jargon was to me. Then I tried Portuguese and the few Dutch words I knew, but without result. Again she spoke, and this time I understood, for she was speaking in the dialect of the Tucumaris, which I knew.

"'"Who are you, Bearded One?" she asked, "and why have you taken me from the Myankos? And by what magic was the fire made to leap into the air and make much noise to frighten the Myankos. Is it to eat me yourself that you have made me your prisoner?"

"'I reassured her, told her I was a friend, that I was no Indian, but of her own race, that I was taking her to restore her to her people, and that I had caused the explosion which had frightened off the Myankos. She listened and appeared incredulous. Evidently she either did not fully understand my Tucamari or else could not grasp the meaning of what I said.

"'"My people," she declared, as I ceased speaking, "are the Patoradi, and you, Bearded One, are not one of them, and yet you say you are of my race and are taking me to my people."

"'I was amazed. This lovely, fair-skinned girl was calmly and very sincerely informing me that she was an Indian, a Patoradi, a tribe of which I had never heard. Was I dreaming or had I taken leave of my senses? Then I thought of the many tales I had heard of so-called "white Indians"; tales I had always considered pure fiction, based perhaps on Albino Indians who are common enough. Was it possible that there were White Indians after all, and that this girl was a member of such a tribe?

"'Are all the Patoradis white-skinned like yourself?' I asked her.

"'"No, Bearded One," she replied, "not like myself, but of the color of your skin, Bearded One."

"'That did away with the White Indian theory, for I well knew that I must be the color of mahogany and fully as dark as many an Indian. It must be then that she was an Albino. But every Albino Indian I had ever seen had been a repulsive-looking, colorless-eyed, pimply-faced freak, and this girl was beautiful. Her hair was lustrous and golden-brown, her eyes full and a true blue, and her skin, although slightly olive, was tinted with pink and was not at all that of Albino. Nevertheless, I decided she must be a freak, for she could not be white—no white person, I felt sure, had ever been near the Patoradis, and she spoke only the Indian dialects. I questioned her further. "Who is your father?" I asked, "and how do you speak the Tucumari if you are of the Patoradis? And how came it you were a captive of the savage Myankos?"

"'"My father, Bearded One, was Nakadi, chief of the Patoradis, and I am Merima his daughter," she replied proudly. "Much we trade with the Tucumaris, who are our friends, and so their tongue is known to us. Always have the Myankos been our enemies, and they destroyed my village and killed my father and took many prisoners. All were eaten but myself, who was saved to be taken to the Myanko chief to be eaten, for those of chief's blood may only be devoured by chiefs. I have no people left, Bearded One, and you cannot take me to my people as you say. But if you are a friend as your tongue says, and have no desires to eat me, then I thank you for your bravery in saving me from the Myankos. But you have great magic and I am your slave."

"'Curling herself up in the canoe, with a gesture of finality, she fell asleep as calmly and peacefully as though, a few moments before, she had not been destined for a cannibal feast or was not a homeless, fatherless waif in the woodskin of a strange being in the heart of the jungle.

"'As I drifted on, hour after hour, and looked upon the girl lying unconscious before me, a great longing filled my heart and tears welled to my eyes, as I thought back through the years to the time when my daughter was lost to me. Now Fate brought this fatherless girl to me. I determined that if ever we reached civilization, I would adopt her as my daughter to fill the place of my long dead child.

"'What if she were an Indian, a partial Albino, as I knew she must be? She was as fair as many a white woman, she was beautiful, her eyes and her every expression and act bespoke high intelligence. Training and education would fit her to hold her place and be a credit to me. And if we won through, she would be rich, for did I not have a fortune in emeralds and gold? Comforted by such thoughts, breathing wordless thanks to the God who had guided me, I drifted on until the raucous notes of parrots and toucans and the calls of countless birds warned me that dawn was approaching, and the velvet black sky grew blue and the stars were snuffed out and the shadowy forest was clear and sharp in the light of sunrise.'"

CHAPTER VII

"'MERIMA awoke as the first rays of the sun shot athwart the river and dispelled the mists of night. For a moment she looked puzzled, and then her face cleared and she smiled and spoke the morning greeting of the Tucumaris:

"'"Manuaida (may the day bring happiness), O, Bearded One."

"'"And to you, also, Manuaida," I responded.

"'Running the canoe ashore, I soon had a fire going, and Merima's looks of wonder and surprise, as I struck a light by flint and steel, was as great as had been those of the monkey-men, the first time they had witnessed the seeming miracle.

"'But she would have none of my preparing the meal. That was her work, she insisted; the work of a woman and not of a great chief, and, she added, I was a mighty chief indeed, for had I not alone rescued her from the Myankos? Had I not brought thunder from the sky to destroy and frighten them? And did I not have the chief's crown of purple feathers?

"'She was as gay and light-hearted as a child, and I marvelled that she could have recovered so quickly from her recent trying experiance and her bereavement. But the Indians, as you doubtless know, take their sorrows and troubles lightly and do not make their lives miserable by thinking of the past as do white men; and theirs is a very sensible habit, too. As she busied herself over the fire, I got out the largest piece of bark-cloth I had, and after washing it well, I hung it in the sun to dry, for I intended to have Merima use it for some sort of clothing. Oddly enough, although I had long been accustomed to seeing Indian women

nude or nearly nude, yet the sight of Merima, with only a very small portion of her lovely body and fair skin covered by a scanty skirt-like strip of bark-cloth, troubled me and struck me as immodest.

"'She was highly amused when I handed her the piece of cloth and explained my wishes, but she was ready to obey me in anything and draped it about her shoulders with a feminine cleverness which was amazing. As we slipped down the river that day, Merima told me much about her tribe, her life, and the habits and customs of the Petoradis. The more she told me the more I marveled that I had never before heard of the tribe. But, after all, it was not so very surprising, for while I was familiar with much of the country and many of its Indian denizens, still I knew that there were countless tribes dwelling in the remote fastnesses of the unexplored jungles, whose existence was unknown even to other aborigines. And I realized that I had been and still was in a very remote portion of the land. The village of the Metakis, where I had first run across the Waupona, was far from the coast and settlements; from there I had travelled countless miles further into the interior to the valley of the monkey-men, and for all I knew I was now farther inland than when I was in the valley. I tried to learn from Merima where the Patoradis dwelt, but her knowledge was very vague and she had not the least idea of the direction in which she had been carried by her savage captors. All she knew was that her home had been within sight of large snow-capped mountains and beside a river, but from what she told me of the people and their habits and food I knew that they must have dwelt at a comparatively high altitude on one of the great inland plateaus. She was, of course, very curious about me and my people, but she was quite unable to grasp the idea of any race of men other than Indians or of any land other than that to which she was accustomed.

"'When we stopped at noonday for lunch, I succeeded in killing a curassow or wild turkey, and while Merima was preparing this, I searched about and soon found a good sized Seda Virgin tree. From this I obtained a large sheet of the cloth-like inner bark, and by roping the ends of this by means of strong cord made of twisted strips of the same bark, I fashioned a rough and ready, but quite serviceable and comfortable hammock, for I had no intention of letting the girl sleep in the canoe or on the ground exposed to the attacks of ants and other insect pests, and she had positively refused to let me give up my hammock for her. Merima laughed gaily at my bag-shaped makeshift, and, after our meal, she hurried about and gathered a great bundle of the silkgrass that grew abundantly close to the water. Throughout the afternoon she worked diligently, shredding the grass and twisting the fibre into cord, and by night she had a number of balls of strong, soft twine with which she informed me she planned to weave a real hammock. But a good hammock cannot be made in a day, and it was more than a week later that she at last swung her new hammock between the trees. She was a most self-reliant creature and had a far greater knowledge of bush resources and native handicraft than I possessed, and I often wondered how any white girl would have fared if left to her own devices in a jungle, where Merima could have lived quite comfortably if she had found herself alone.

"'Constantly, too, as we drifted along from dawn until dark, I was planning for her future. Barring accidents or the remote chance of running afoul of hostile Indians, we would eventually reach the settlements, and at the first outpost of civilization I would take steps to legally adopt Merima as my daughter. I realized that there might be obstacles to this if the swarthy officials saw her and cast covetous eyes upon her, for after all she was an Indian, and, in the minds of the natives, Indians are all fair prey. But the chances were that the first place we reached would be some tiny village with a ragged, barefooted "corregidor" or "alcalde" who would be quite willing to do anything within or without the law in return for one of my nuggets or a small emerald. Even if we came to a large town and I had difficulties with the legal matters I had enough wealth to buy any Latin American official who ever lived. Moreover, where there was a settlement there also would be a church and a padre, and my first step would be to have Merima baptized and have a priest act as her godfather, after which her status in the community would be entirely altered. Merima, however, was of course an utter pagan, and in order to carry out my plans she would have to possess some knowledge of the Christian religion and a desire to join the Church. With this in mind I decided to devote my time to instructing her. I told her of my religion and attempted to teach her English. But that was easier said than done. Although I could readily speak and understand the Tucumari dialect, yet Indian tongues have their limits, and while they are very complex and rich, yet they possess no equivalents for many of our commonest words and no means of expressing many of our civilized ideas and thoughts. Merima listened intently, the while busily working at a supply of lace-bark which she was deftly transforming into a wrapper-like dress—for once she understood I wished her clothed, she was anxious to please me. I could see she regarded my words as some sort of a fairy tale or legend. I tried my hardest to explain my beliefs and to impress her. She was a very intelligent young woman and quick to guess at my meaning and to supply words where I failed, and she soon began to understand and to take a real interest and to ask questions. I must confess that many of her queries would have baffled a far more advanced theologian than myself, and many of her interrogations set me to thinking along lines which had never before occurred to me. Why, she asked, was the Christian God superior to the gods of the Patoradis? All her life she had been given health, food, shelter, friends and everything she desired. Could my God give her anything more? But, I pointed out, the Indians' gods had failed them when the Myankos attacked them.

"'"And does the Bearded One's God never fail His people?" she demanded. "Do the people of my Bearded One never have wars, and are they never killed?"

"'I flushed and hesitated, but I was forced to confess that the Christian God apparently allowed His worshippers to meet with disaster as frequently as did the gods of the Indians. Merima, nevertheless, was quite willing to embrace Christianity, not because she believed in it or had been converted by my words, but because she felt that it was my wish and since it was my religion she should make it hers. However, while such a convert might not be all that a strict churchman might desire, my purpose would be served. She could, I knew, understand any ordinary questions that might be asked her by a priest, and she had a fairly good idea of the underlying basis of Christianity. Later on she could be properly instructed. From all this it might be assumed that I am a deeply religious man; but I am not. I do not belong to any particular sect or church, and I firmly believe that every man and woman has a right to worship any deity or deities he or she prefers. I have dwelt among many races with many beliefs, and it seems to me one religion is as good as another, provided a person has true faith and lives up to the teachings of that religion. In fact I

have never had any patience whatever with those misguided individuals or sects who are forever striving to force their own personal beliefs and religions down the throats of others who do not agree with them. As far as I personally was concerned, Merima might have remained a pagan forever, or rather, I should say, she might forever have adhered to the beliefs of her tribe. But I knew in a Catholic country where the Church possesses vast power and influence, it would be both to her advantage and my own to have her a Christian—outwardly at least. I was not at all sure, as a matter of fact, that I could legally adopt her until she had been baptized.

"'Hard as it proved to make her understand my outline of Christianity, I found it still harder to teach her my language. She was anxious enough to learn and took a far greater interest in my efforts to teach her English than in my attempts to convert her to my faith. But her tongue, lips and vocal cords, accustomed only to producing the gutteral, peculiar sounds of her native dialect, were ill adapted for pronouncing English words. Often her attempts to repeat a word after me were highly amusing, and we both laughed heartily as she pursed her lips, screwed up her face and slowly and painstakingly tried to pronounce some word, only to fail utterly. But she was a persevering little thing and enthusiastically desirous of succeeding, and gradually, as the days passed, she learned to utter the words. And to my amazement, when she did master the sounds, she spoke the words without the least accent. She was most particular in this respect, and would not speak a word which she could not pronounce perfectly. This made her progress rather slow and I foresaw that it would be a long time before she could express herself readily or even thoroughly understand English, for so highly developed was her sense of sound—the slightest varying shade of accent or pronunciation of an Indian word changes its meaning—that a word carelessly spoken or mispronounced was entirely unintelligible to her.

"'But if my attempts to instruct Merima accomplished little in some ways, yet they served to pass the time, and the days sped swiftly. At first, I had forgotten to keep my string calendar, but I soon rectified this, and on the third day after finding Merima I again resumed my daily knot-tying. Hence I knew it was on the eighteenth day after emerging from the tunnel that we struck the first rapids. To be sure, we had several times passed through swift, broken water, but nothing that was dangerous or difficult, and the canoe had behaved wonderfully. But now, ahead, stretched a long series of foaming, rock-filled rapids stretched ahead. Alone, I should not have hesitated to have run boldly through them, but with the added weight and the responsibility of Merima I was rather fearful of attempting it in my frail craft. Mooring the woodskin at the head of the rapids, I stepped ashore, and with Merima by my side, I walked down stream examining the rushing water, locating the rocks and speculating on my chances of running the gauntlet safely. They were not bad as rapids go in the bush, and luckily there were no true falls or cataracts. Had the stretch of broken water been shorter, however, I would have laboriously portaged the canoe around rather than take the risk. But it was an impossible task to portage the craft for over a mile through the forest, and Merima laughed at my hesitation, declaring that there was no danger and that many a time she had run far worse rapids by herself.

"'Moreover, she could, I knew, swim like an otter, for she regularly took her morning dip and appeared as much at home in water as on land. With some misgivings therefore, I shoved the canoe from shore and into the racing current.

"'Merima had grasped the extra paddle I had provided, and standing in the bow, wielded the paddle and swung the bobbing, racing craft from jagged black rocks with all the consummate skill of an Indian boatman. As she stood there, her long hair flying, swaying and undulating in perfect rhythm to the wildly gyrating motions of the frail canoe, plying her paddle first on one side and then the other, shouting back a direction or a warning to me, and with her face flushed with excitement, I gazed at her in admiration and thought what a wonderful specimen of perfect womanhood she was.

"Without her aid, I doubt if I would have come through the rapids in safety. As it was, we never grazed a rock, never shipped a pint of water, and in almost no time shot from the last broken water into the tranquil river beyond.

"'Throughout that day and the next we traversed rapid after rapid, and thus I knew that hitherto we must have been traveling across the fairly level plateau of the far interior and that now we were descending the slope towards the lowlands and the sea. This was encouraging, but I was aware that many miles and many days of travel might still lie before us. There might be even worse rapids and falls ahead; but each hour that we sped on we drew nearer and nearer to the haunts of civilized men. Also, there might be settlements or even good-sized towns far up this river. Often, too, we had passed the mouths of other streams; some mere creeks, other good-sized rivers, which made me feel sure that the stream we were following was a main river or the tributary of some great river. So far, too, we had met no Indians, and this also convinced me that we were on a major stream, for the Indians seldom dwell upon such large rivers; they prefer the smaller streams and creeks. Still we had maintained a sharp lookout for chance canoes drawn upon the banks or for signs of savages, for we never knew, but that, when rounding some bend or turn, we might suddenly find ourselves face to face with a boat load of hostiles or a village of enemy Indians. More than once we had found unmistakable proofs of the presence of savages in the neighborhood.

"'Once we had found a dead deer floating in a backwater and with the broken shaft of an arrow protruding from his neck. At another time Merima's sharp eyes had detected bits of shredded silk grass floating from the mouth of a small creek. Twice we had seen the thin blue spirals of smoke from Indian camps rising above the forest in the distance, and on another occasion, as we passed by the half-concealed opening that marked a sluggish "*Itabu*" or side channel, Merima had raised her hand for silence, and from afar off in the jungle we had heard the yelping barks of Indians' dogs. Despite her recent experience with the Myankos, Merima seemed less fearful of meeting Indians than was I. Partly, she had a most gratifying and supreme confidence in my ability to overcome anything or to triumph over any savages, based, of course, on my lucky and successful rout of the Myankos. But such an act could not be repeated, and I was well aware that I would stand no chance with only my bow and arrows and my machete for weapons, if we should meet hostile Indians. Of course, the Indians we might meet might not be enemies, for by far the greater number of aborigines in the country are peaceable and friendly. Had I known where we were, I would have been more at ease, for I should then have known pretty well what tribes we were likely to meet. But there was no use worrying over it. So far fate, luck or Providence had been with me,

and, being something of a fatalist and a believer in luck, I felt fairly confident that we would come through in safety.

"'We had camped as usual beside the river, but well hidden from any chance voyagers on the stream, and as always we had been careful to extinguish the last glowing spark of the fire which might serve to betray our presence, for I felt that the danger of savage men was far greater than the danger from the vampire bats, which are kept at a safe distance by the light from a fire.

"'It seemed as if I had barely closed my eyes when I found myself awake, keyed up, listening intently as if through my subconsciousness some danger signal had penetrated. From her hammock beside me, I could hear Merima's regular breathing; not an unusual sound broke the silence, and yet I was filled with a strange sensation of dread, of imminent peril, and without moving I turned my eyes towards the forest with its black shadows, blacker by contrast with the pale light of the waning moon. Instantly my heart seemed to cease beating and I felt paralyzed with gripping fear. Within twenty yards of my hammock stood a naked, painted Indian, his low blowgun resting across a small tree and pointed directly at me. Beyond him, like shadows creeping along the forest edge, were two more savages, each armed with a blowgun and a powerful bow and arrows, silently, stealthily approaching Merima and myself. I felt absolutely sick with terror. To move a muscle or utter a sound meant certain death for myself and death or worse for the girl. At my first word, at my first whisper to Merima, the Indians would spring upon us, and even before they reached our hammocks a poisoned dart would bury itself in my flesh. I was absolutely helpless, powerless even to warn my companion of her approaching doom. The flicker of an eyelid might bring the deadly missile from the blowgun, and I marveled that my fast throbbing heart and fear-shaken limbs had not already warned the savage that I was awake. Nearer and nearer to the hammocks crept the other two Indians. The seconds seemed like hours, and the sound of my heart beats seemed to echo through the silence of the night and to shake my hammock.

"'Sweat poured from my skin, chills ran over me, and I had an insane desire to scream, to spring up, to at least warn Merima before the blow fell.

"'Then a strange, an amazing thing happened. Suddenly the Indian with the leveled blowgun turned his head and glanced downward at his feet. The next instant, with a low cry of horror, he leaped back, dropping his weapon as he did so.

"'At the sound, the other two halted and wheeled in time to see their companion dashing madly into the forest. Before he had covered a dozen yards, panic seized them and they, too, turned and fled. Scarcely had they started to run, when the first fellow stumbled and fell, uttering a fearful blood-curdling scream. The next moment he was up again, and in the moonlight I saw with terror that from feet to waist his yellow-brown skin was hidden by a moving, swarming, black mass. Instantly I understood the reason for the savages' mad terror, for their panic-stricken flight. The Indians were surrounded, attacked by the most terrible of jungle creatures—the irresistible swarming, millions of the all-devouring army-ants!

"'Merima, aroused by the first yells of the savages, had started up and had cried out in alarm. At sound of her voice my senses had returned to me, and in a hoarse, terrified voice, I warned her not to stir from her hammock, and in rapid, terse words explained what had threatened and what was taking place.

"'Brave, jungle-trained, obedient girl that she was, she remained motionless, half-sitting up in her hammock, her eyes like my own, staring, fascinated, at the tragedy taking place before us. Frantically but vainly the Indians were struggling against the hordes of biting, ravenous, hunger-mad ants which on every side, surrounded and overwhelmed them, covering the ground with a living, undulating carpet that pushed steadily onward like a living torrent, and relentlessly devouring every living thing in its path. Over the shrieking Indians the creatures swarmed, and from under our hammocks, from all about, from the trees near, came the sound of their moving bodies and hungry jaws, like the rustle of a wind among dry leaves. I shuddered and I saw Merima's eyes widen and her face blanch, as glancing about, we saw the black millions covering the earth, swarming up the trees, covering everything except our hammocks within which we were safe from attack, for the army-ants will not cross a rough rope. Meanwhile the Indians' yells were growing fainter. One of the three with blood pouring from thousands of bites, had broken through the ant-army, and shrieking like a maniac, had vanished in the jungle. Another was still fighting madly, brushing the swarming creatures from his eyes, uttering heart-rending cries of agony, blinded, beset on every side, and already doomed. The third, the last to take alarm, had been silenced; he had been overwhelmed and was now hidden under the swarming ants. In a moment more the other savage's cries turned to groans, he sank to the earth, and soon all that marked the presence of the two were formless, motionless mounds of ants. Trembling and nauseated, I watched the seemingly endless army of insects pass on its devastating way, apparently never stopping even to devour their human victims.

"'For hour after hour we lay there with staring eyes, not daring to stir from our hammocks, until at last day dawned and by the welcome light we saw the last few stragglers of the ant-army scurrying over the ground and vanishing in the forest. A short distance away two piles of clean-picked white bones and two grinning skulls were all that remained of the fierce savages, from whom we had been so miraculously saved.

"'Staggering from my hammock, I fell upon my knees and thanked God fervently for our deliverance. For a moment Merima watched me curiously, and then, dropping to her knees beside me, she, too, in her own way gave thanks to him who had guarded us through that terrible night.

"'As I rose, Merima gazed at me fixedly for a moment, a peculiar expression in her eyes. "Yesterday, Bearded One, I had no faith in that God of yours," she announced. "I believed only in your magic and the gods of the Patoradis. But neither your magic nor the Patoradi gods could have sent the ants to kill our enemies, so it must have been your God, and henceforth shall I, too, worship Him."

CHAPTER VIII

"'IT was four days after our miraculous deliverance from the Indians, that we came to a fork in the river. Directly in its centre it was split by a wooded point, and I had no possible way of determining which branch to follow. However, it made little difference, for eventually both streams must lead to the coast. I longed to reach the settlements by the shortest route and was therefore fearful of taking the longest. Deciding to trust to the Indians' instinct, and to woman's intuition, I left the choice to Merima, and without hesitation she took the left hand stream.

"'Very soon, I knew, we must be approaching the lowlands, we had left all the ranges and cataracts astern. Yellow and blue macaws appeared in place of the red and green species of the interior. Water fowl and herons increased in numbers. Fan-palms and ivory-nut-palms appeared among the trees. The river flowed sluggishly, and along the banks were growths of broad-leaved water plants, rushes and giant lilies. All great danger of hostile Indians, I felt was over, there were no more rapids to run, and feeling more joyous and elated than I had felt for months, I paddled on with Merima helping, and now looking quite civilized in her loose single garment that fell from her shoulders to her ankles, and with her hair neatly braided and coiled. Each day the river widened and more and more indications of the low lands were apparent, until the current completely ceased and we found ourselves floating on the placid surface of a large lake. Everywhere were jungle-covered islands, and on every hand stretched the jungle-covered shores with no visible outlet. I was bitterly disappointed and could see nothing to do but paddle back up miles of river and descend the other branch. But before abandoning all hope, I decided to paddle around the shores in search of some stream that flowed from the lake. I found not one but a score. All were small, however, and one seemed as promising, or rather as little promising as another. But it was worth trying, and, if after a reasonable time, the stream I selected did not increase in size, or if I found it was not flowing in a general northerly direction, I could still retrace my way. So, pushing through the plants and low-hanging vines that almost concealed the entrance to one of the outlets, I followed the stream into the jungle. Very quickly the stream broadened, the current increased, and by nightfall we were again on a large river.

"'Encouraged, we chatted and laughed as we ate our evening meal, and I told Merima my plans for the future. Somehow, up to then, I had never mentioned my idea of adopting her.

"'But she was elated at the idea. In fact, more than elated, for she could not express her delight at thought of having found a new father, and it was with difficulty that I could prevent her from grovelling before me as the monkey-men had done when I was their king.

"'The next morning we started at dawn and, at any time now, I half expected to see a clearing, a village of friendly Indians or signs of man's presence.

"'Scarcely two hours had passed after leaving our camp when, as we swung around a curve, a surprised exclamation burst from Merima's lips, and the next second I uttered a glad, triumphant shout. Less than a mile distant the jungle ended, cleared fields covered a low hill, and shining brightly in the morning sunshine, were houses! They were miserable shacks to be sure, native huts of adobe and thatch, but the houses of civilized men, and above them rose the squat tower of a church surmounted by a cross sharply silhouetted against the clear blue sky. Never had a tiny native village been more welcome to human eyes than was that first sight of Santa Ysobel to me. And to Merima it was the greatest wonder, the most marvelous thing in all her life. Never before had she seen any house save the open benab of an Indian, and to her the clustered hovels on the hill were most amazing structures, and the church must have appeared like a veritable skyscraper.

"'We attracted little attention as we ran the canoe ashore beside a dozen dugouts at the landing place below the village. The few ragged mulattos and mestizos, who lounged about, appeared to take little interest in the bearded stranger with garments as threadbare as their own who stepped from a canoe, accompanied by an Indian girl. They were far too accustomed to seeing travellers from the bush to show any curiosity, and to them, no doubt, I appeared merely another bush trader with a half-breed companion. But had Merima possessed wings, and had I worn horns, I doubt if the natives would have been roused from their inherent and chronic state of laziness and lethargy. As we passed up the hill, Merima staring about with wondering eyes at everything, a few unkempt women peered at us from their doorways, naked children scurried from the sunbaked littered street, and the few men we saw glanced at us in half-hearted fashion, as if rather wondering who we were and on what errand, and yet not possessing enough vitality to ask.

"'In his humble adobe dwelling beside the ancient church, I found the padre, a white-haired, lean-faced, kindly-eyed priest, who gravely, but smilingly welcomed us and asked in what manner he could serve me. And as I related my tale, or as much of it as had to do with Merima, and explained my plans and desires, he listened attentively, nodding now and then, and uttering half-suppressed exclamations of amazement at times, until I had ended.

"'"It is a strange, a most marvelous tale, my son," he exclaimed. "You have seen things which have been granted no other man, and through all you have been led and guarded by our Heavenly Father. In my youth, I, too, was filled with the spirit of adventure, and wandered far and among strange peoples, striving ever to spread the true Faith. Many Indian tribes did I know—and, Alas! I fear they proved barren ground for the word of God—and in my wanderings I have heard mentioned the name of the Patoradis though never did I reach within many leagues of their land. But the Tucumaris I knew well, and their language I understand and speak somewhat, though 'tis years since my ears heard words or my tongue tried to form the sounds of the dialect; hence it is well that the maiden speaks that tongue, for thus can I converse with her. Truly, my son," he continued, "it is a worthy deed you have in mind—to adopt the maiden as your daughter. And I doubt if you will find it a difficult matter, for Don Ramon, the alcalde, is a good fellow at heart—though he drinks over much and is not too attentive to his duties. And he is a good friend of mine. I misdoubt if he knows the law or if he has the papers necessary to be signed, but in such matters I can act for the State as well as the Church, and all Don Ramon need do is to sign his name and affix his seal. But as you thought, my son, first must the maiden be baptized and registered as a Christian and a communicant of my church, for under the law, the pagan, the Indians are wards of the government and may not be treated like other citizens. And a most worthy deed have you done in teaching the child the truths of Christianity and in converting her to a belief in our true God. Now, my son, will I summon old Marta and give the maiden into her care to be properly clad. Then, when we have dined, conversed with,—Merima, is it not?—to assure myself of her desires, I will give her baptism and fill out the papers that will be signed by Don Ramon."

"'Rising, he clapped his hands, and in response to his summons a stout, good-natured old Indian woman appeared, and in a few words Fray Benedicto gave her his orders. Merima, poor girl, looked thoroughly frightened and hung back, for of course she understood no word of what any of us had been saying, as the conversation had been all in Spanish. But when the kind-faced Padre spoke to her reassuringly in the familiar Tucumari, and I also added a few

words, she smiled and followed old Marta willingly.

"'Then Fray Benedicto thoughtfully suggested that I, too, needed proper garments, and calling a Mestizo boy, he ordered him to supply anything I might need. Soap, a shave and clean whole clothes, though they were no more than coarse native garments of cotton, transformed me into a new man, and as I entered the cool "sala" Fray Benedicto uttered a cry of amazement at my altered appearance. He had been pacing back and forth as I entered, a perplexed, troubled look upon his face. Then, having recovered quickly from his first surprise at my transformation, he came forward and laid a hand upon my shoulder.

"'His manner and his expression gave me a premonition of something wrong, and my heart sank at thought that it must have to do with Merima. And his first words convinced me my fears were justified.

"'"My son," he said bravely, "I fear that it will not be possible for you to adopt the maiden—at least for the present. I have made—"

"'"Not possible?" I cried, "Why not? If it is a question of money, I have wealth and to spare—gold and emeralds. If your Don Ramon—"

"'He held up his hand and smiled. "Nay," he said, interrupting my words. "It is not a matter of money as you think. Merima, the Patoradi, you could have adopted in full compliance with the laws within the hour. But the maiden is no Indian."

"'"Not an Indian!" I gasped. "Nonsense! Of course she's Indian, an Albino, or partial Albino perhaps, but an Indian just the same."

"'Fray Benedicto smiled and shook his gray head.

'"So I, too, thought until a few moments ago," he said.

'"But Indians—not even the Patoradis—do not vaccinate and the girl bears the mark of vaccination. Who she may be I know not, but that she is white and no Indian, I am certain."

"'I sank back into a chair utterly overwhelmed, incredulous and unable to believe my ears.

"'"But, but," I stammered, "If she's not an Indian, if she is white how—what—"

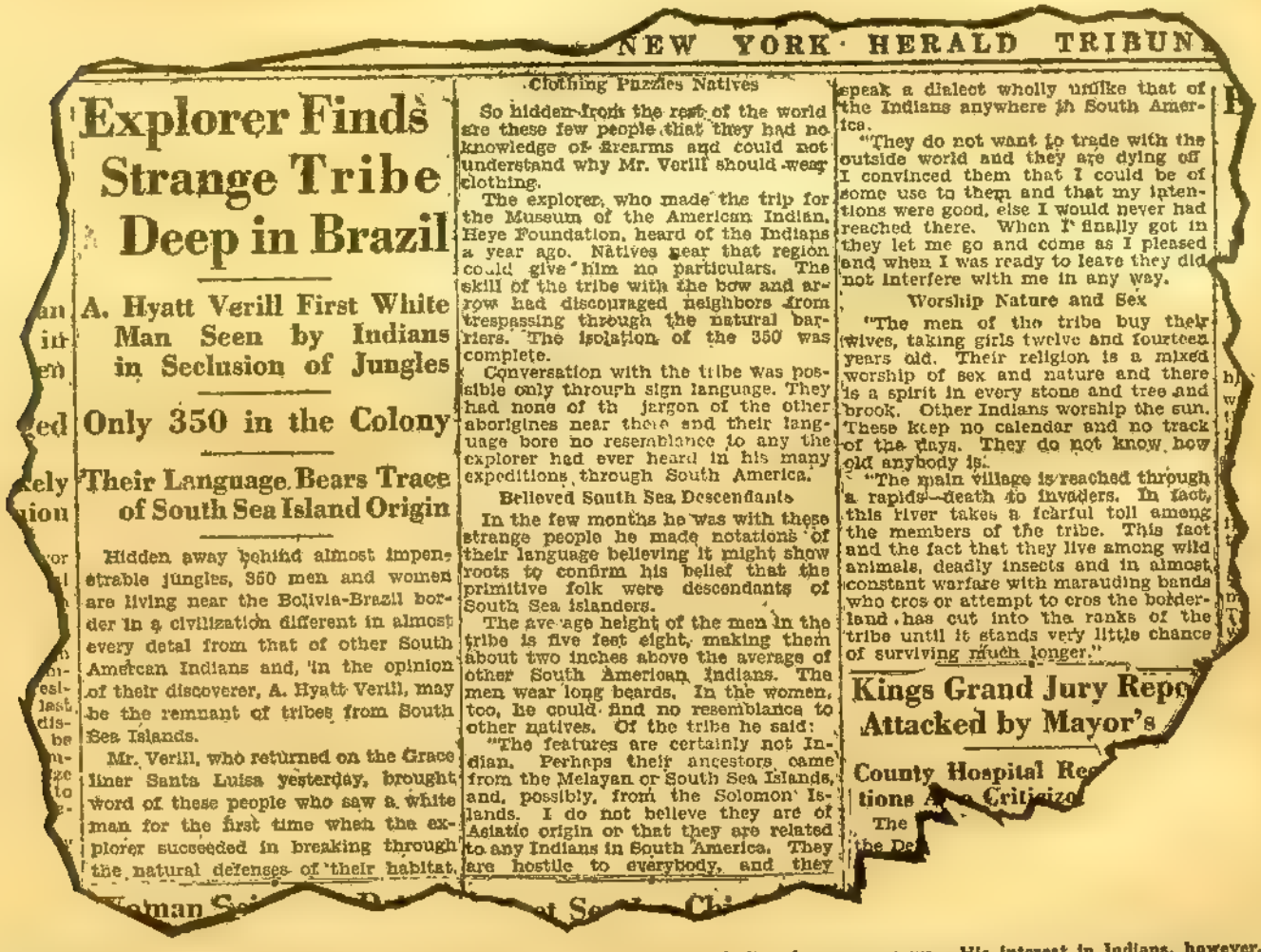
"'"If you doubt it, here is further proof," announced Fray Benedicto.

"'"Old Marta found it among the savage ornaments the maiden wore!"

"'As he spoke, he handed me a small golden trinket, a tiny, worn locket, an unmistakable example of civilized man's workmanship.

"'For an instant I gazed dully at the thing and then an involuntary cry came from my lips, and I stared at the bit of jewelry with fascinated, unbelieving eyes. Trembling, torn between hopes and fears, I pressed a secret spring and the back of the locket came open. Tears filled my eyes. I felt suddenly weak as I gazed like one in a trance at what was revealed. It was impossible, utterly incredible, but true. Within the locket, faded and stained, was the portrait of a fair-haired blue-eyed child—the portrait of my long lost daughter, my baby Ruth!

"'Overcome with emotion, unable to grasp the over-



NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE

Explorer Finds Strange Tribe Deep in Brazil

A. Hyatt Verill First White Man Seen by Indians in Seclusion of Jungles

Only 350 in the Colony

Their Language Bears Trace of South Sea Island Origin

Hidden away behind almost impenetrable jungles, 350 men and women are living near the Bolivia-Brazil border in a civilization different in almost every detal from that of other South American Indians and, in the opinion of their discoverer, A. Hyatt Verill, may be the remnant of tribes from South Sea Islands.

Mr. Verill, who returned on the Grace liner Santa Luisa yesterday, brought word of these people who saw a white man for the first time when the explorer succeeded in breaking through the natural defenses of their habitat.

Clothing Puzzles Natives

So hidden from the rest of the world are these few people that they had no knowledge of firearms and could not understand why Mr. Verill should wear clothing.

The explorer, who made the trip for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, heard of the Indians a year ago. Natives near that region could give him no particulars. The skill of the tribe with the bow and arrow had discouraged neighbors from trespassing through the natural barriers. The isolation of the 350 was complete.

Conversation with the tribe was possible only through sign language. They had none of th jargon of the other aborigines near there and their language bore no resemblance to any the explorer had ever heard in his many expeditions through South America.

Believed South Sea Descendants

In the few months he was with these strange people he made notations of their language believing it might show roots to confirm his belief that the primitive folk were descendants of South Sea islanders.

The ave age height of the men in the tribe is five feet eight, making them about two inches above the average of other South American Indians. The men wear long beards. In the women, too, he could find no resemblance to other natives. Of the tribe he said:

"The features are certainly not Indian. Perhaps their ancestors came from the Melayan or South Sea Islands, and, possibly, from the Solomon Islands. I do not believe they are of Asiatic origin or that they are related to any Indians in South America. They are hostile to everybody, and they speak a dialect wholly unlike that of the Indians anywhere in South America.

"They do not want to trade with the outside world and they are dying off I convinced them that I could be of some use to them and that my intentions were good, else I would never had reached there. When I finally got in they let me go and come as I pleased and when I was ready to leave they did not interfere with me in any way.

Worship Nature and Sex

"The men of the tribe buy their wives, taking girls twelve and fourteen years old. Their religion is a mixed worship of sex and nature and there is a spirit in every stone and tree and brook. Other Indians worship the sun. These keep no calendar and no track of the days. They do not know how old anybody is.

"The main village is reached through a rapids—death to invaders. In fact, this river takes a fearful toll among the members of the tribe. This fact and the fact that they live among wild animals, deadly insects and in almost constant warfare with marauding bands who cros or attempt to cros the borderland has cut into the ranks of the tribe until it stands very little chance of surviving much longer."

Kings Grand Jury Repo Attacked by Mayor's

County Hospital Re tions Criticize

The

the De

Mr. A. Hyatt Verrill has been connected with the Museum of the American Indian for many years. His interest in Indians, however, is not confined to the American. Perhaps one reason he is so well able to inject a touch of realism to his stories about South America and its various strange tribes is because he has made so many interesting discoveries during his various expeditions through that country. The story published in this issue, we feel, bears out this statement.

whelming truth, fearing to trust my senses, I sat there, my eyes fixed upon the miniature within the locket, tears coursing down my cheeks until I was aroused by the kindly priest who laid one hand gently upon my bowed head.

"'"Oh, God!" I groaned, "Can it be true? Can Merima be my own daughter? How can I ever be sure?"

"'"Perchance still another miracle has been wrought," said Fray Benedicto in reverential tones. "Had your daughter no marks of identification, no blemish, no mole, nothing by which you could recognize her beyond all question of a doubt?"

"'For a brief moment I gathered my scattered senses together and thought deeply. Then a cry of joy came from my lips, as I remembered.

"'"Yes," I exclaimed, "a tiny birthmark like a pink crescent at the nape of the neck. Oh—"

"'But Fray Benedicto was hurrying from the room before my sentence was completed.

"'In a moment he reappeared, leading Merima by the hand. But not the Merima I had known. Instead, I saw a gloriously beautiful girl whose loveliness was enhanced rather than diminished by the cheap calico dress she wore. With twinkling eyes and a happy smile, the priest drew her towards me as Merima, failing to recognize me at first, held back half fearfully.

"'"My son, give thanks to God that another miracle has happened," cried Fray Benedicto, as he crossed himself. "The maiden is your own flesh and blood, your daughter, whom none may dispute. Look for yourself. The mark is there."

"'Sobbing with joy, muttering incoherently, I clasped Merima in my arms and in broken words of English, Spanish and Tucumari—strove to tell her that she was my own, long lost daughter. She, poor child, could not grasp it and thought no doubt I had suddenly gone mad. But, as very patiently Fray Benedicto related the story of Ruth's supposed death and showed her the picture of herself in babyhood within the locket, she at last became convinced. But she could remember nothing of her babyhood, of course, nothing of her first few years among the Tucumari and to this day the true story of her salvation, of how she was found and adopted by the Indians, is but a vague conjecture. It mattered little, however. That she was alive and restored to me was enough, and never was there a more joyous party than we three as we breakfasted on that memorable morning in Fray Benedicto's home in little Santa Ysobel.

"'It was all so wonderful, so incredible, and as I looked at Merima, or rather Ruth, in her stiff mestizo dress, a great wave of utter joy and contentment possessed me and I felt that great indeed had been my reward for all the sufferings and hardships I had undergone. I, who had entered the forest penniless and alone, had come forth a Croesus with the loveliest of daughters.'"

"And you actually believe that yarn?" demanded Walker, as Belmont came to the end of the story.

"Most assuredly," replied the explorer. "Meredith had the Waupona feather crown; he had the emeralds and the gold, and he had his daughter. Why should anyone doubt his story?"

"Well, I'd have to be shown," declared Blake. "I'd like to see such convincing accessories—especially the girl."

"Same here," agreed Thurston.

Belmont rose. "You're all hopeless skeptics," he laughed as he reached for his hat. "But come over to my apartments any evening and I'll show you the crown and some of the nuggets and stones. And you can meet Meredith; he's stopping with me for a time."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" ejaculated Walker.

Belmont grinned maliciously from the door. "Besides," he added as a parting shot, "I'd like to introduce you boys to my wife—the Princess Merima."

THE END.

"Quarterly" Readers — — —

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AMAZING STORIES FOR THOSE TIRED OF THE CUT-AND-DRIED LITERATURE OF THE DAY.

The VIBRATOR of DEATH

By Harold F. Richards, Ph.D.

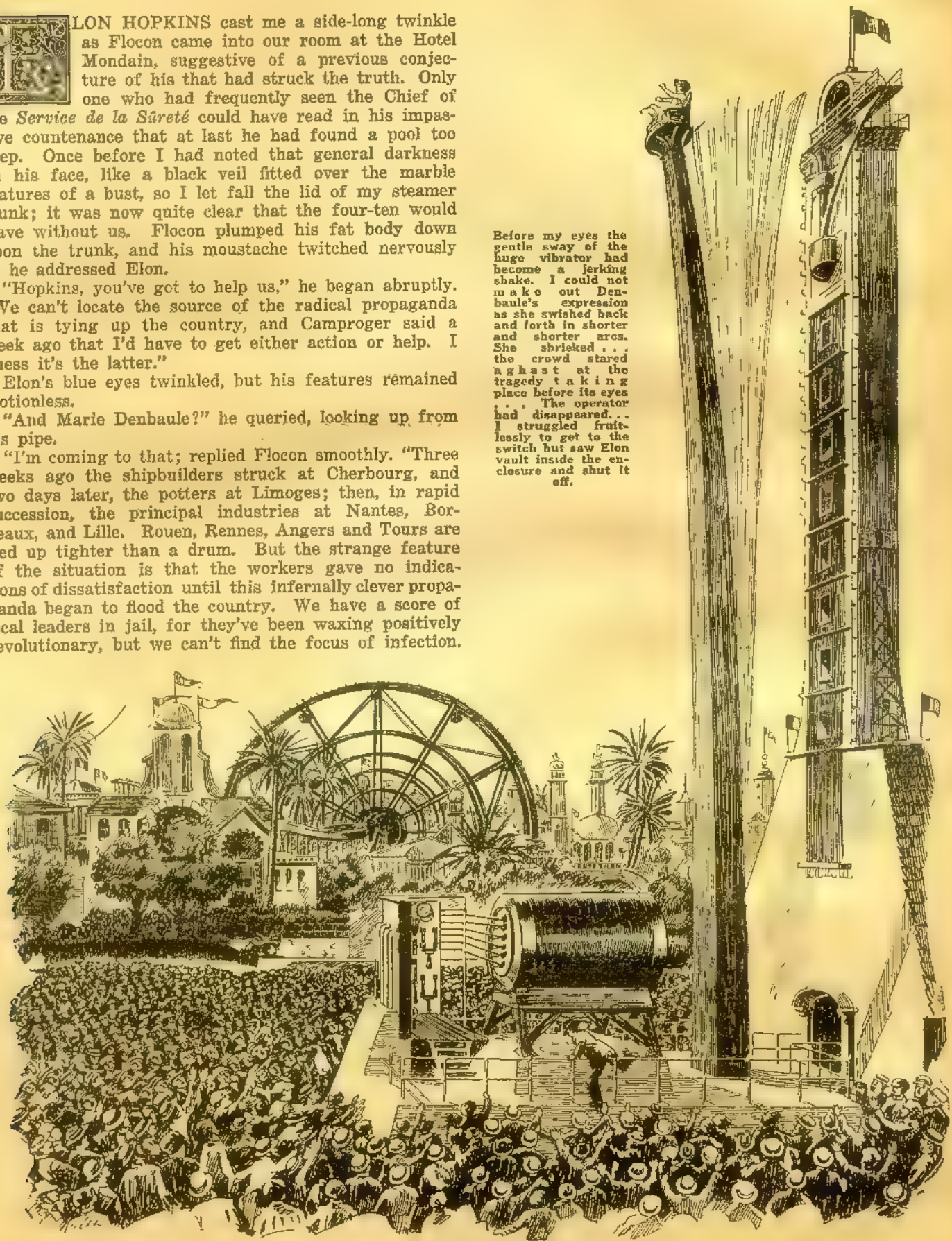
ELON HOPKINS cast me a side-long twinkle as Flocon came into our room at the Hotel Mondain, suggestive of a previous conjecture of his that had struck the truth. Only one who had frequently seen the Chief of the *Service de la Sûreté* could have read in his impassive countenance that at last he had found a pool too deep. Once before I had noted that general darkness on his face, like a black veil fitted over the marble features of a bust, so I let fall the lid of my steamer trunk; it was now quite clear that the four-ten would leave without us. Flocon plumped his fat body down upon the trunk, and his moustache twitched nervously as he addressed Elon.

"Hopkins, you've got to help us," he began abruptly. "We can't locate the source of the radical propaganda that is tying up the country, and Camproger said a week ago that I'd have to get either action or help. I guess it's the latter."

Elon's blue eyes twinkled, but his features remained motionless.

"And Marie Denbaule?" he queried, looking up from his pipe.

"I'm coming to that; replied Flocon smoothly. "Three weeks ago the shipbuilders struck at Cherbourg, and two days later, the potters at Limoges; then, in rapid succession, the principal industries at Nantes, Bordeaux, and Lille. Rouen, Rennes, Angers and Tours are tied up tighter than a drum. But the strange feature of the situation is that the workers gave no indications of dissatisfaction until this infernally clever propaganda began to flood the country. We have a score of local leaders in jail, for they've been waxing positively revolutionary, but we can't find the focus of infection.



Before my eyes the gentle sway of the huge vibrator had become a jerking shake. I could not make out Denbaule's expression as she swished back and forth in shorter and shorter arcs. She shrieked . . . the crowd stared aghast at the tragedy taking place before its eyes . . . The operator had disappeared. . . I struggled fruitlessly to get to the switch but saw Elon vault inside the enclosure and shut it off.

Camproger thinks it's a political plot. Gaudet has been absent from the Chamber for days at a time, on and off for the last month. We've tried to trace his movements, but my best men lose him."

"He is the leader of the Left, isn't he?" asked Elon.

"Yes. He expected to be the next minister, but the work of the Conservatives at the peace convention was too good to be overlooked, and Camproger got in. Since then Gaudet has been strangely quiet, and the Conservatives had things all their way until these strikes began. In the last three weeks the confidence majority has shrunk from 497 to 28, and Camproger told me this morning that his cabinet will fall in two weeks, if we can't stamp out this propaganda."

"It appears obvious, Flocon," interpolated Elon, eyeing the tip of the Chief's nose with aggravating calmness, "that Marie Denbaule is doing more good than all the government forces. She seems to exert a tremendous influence upon the people."

"She is known for her personal magnetism," responded Flocon, as if he begrudged the tribute, "and no one can deny the qualities of her mezzo. Yesterday the steel-workers in Nevers went back, to a man, after she had sung and spoken to them. And she will not stop, despite the threats against her."

"You are providing her with ample protection, Flocon?" queried Elon. "Her voice is one in a generation."

"Camproger insists upon it. Since she will not stop appearing before the strikers, he demands that she be constantly under the eyes of a dozen of my men. I can hardly spare them."

A cold, calculating glint came into Flocon's eyes as he said this, and Elon remarked sharply:

"Denbaule's voice is worth a dozen strikes—or jobs."

Flocon's gaze fell under Elon's penetrating glare.

"Yes, yes, to be sure. But she can't be everywhere at once. This morning I had advices that the chemical workers in Dijon had gone out, and all the men from eight mills in Lyons. There may be a general railroad strike within forty-eight hours."

"The situation is undoubtedly grave, replied Elon, "but nevertheless it seems a matter for Camproger's internal policy. Still, if Denbaule—"

"Hopkins, this case is different," interrupted Flocon. "The workmen are not really dissatisfied, but are being subjected to the most insidious propaganda. Although the Syndicalists have gained some power in the last few years, there are still no closely coördinated unions, for the French temperament is too individualistic to be governed by mass rule. But the literature plays upon the people's natural misgivings about the eventual validity of their large holdings of war bonds; it paints vivid pictures of employers' excesses, and interprets the present unfavorable rate of exchange in a light, which leads the workers to fear that the francs saved for old-age retreats will be worthless. The people may soon see their error; but at the present rate, not before there is terrible suffering and the ministry has fallen."

Flocon took a deep breath, and I wondered whether he was more interested in the suffering of the people or in holding his job. Elon sat staring at the bowl of his pipe.

"What form have the warnings taken, Flocon? The usual note?" he inquired suddenly, and I knew that he was thinking more of the danger to Marie Denbaule than of bread-lines and riots.

Flocon drew out a white envelope; Elon studied the exterior for a moment, then read the note. The snap came back into his eye, the eager spark that I had not seen there since the mystery of the Girondin Murder Syndicate in which Madame de Verzou was the central figure. He ran his glass quickly over the writing, looked through the paper at the window, then tossed it to me. The note ran, in a strong, regular hand:

Mlle. Marie Denbaule:—The people of France will not be duped by one who poses as their friend. The death of an opera singer will be a small matter in comparison to the eternal victory of the masses. Without compunction we will still your beautiful voice, cast the misty fog of death over your flashing eyes, quiet forever the gestures of a sublime actress. Continue your speaking at your peril.

—The Elect of France.

"You are right, Flocon; this is a serious case," said Elon, abruptly. "Ah, you should have seen her in *Carmen* a year ago, Andrews. Superb! And when she quelled that riot yesterday in the *Boul' Miche*—I don't wonder that these Frenchmen go back to work when she—" He glanced quickly from me to Flocon, as if ashamed of his unwonted outburst. "But surely, Flocon, it would be a relatively simple matter to time the appearance of the inflammatory circulars in the various towns, and then trace back the lines of distribution to their focus."

"We have done all that. Every indication is that the infection radiates from Marseilles, but we have found nothing there, although every possible printing shop has been turned inside out. The postal authorities have been examining every suspicious package, but nothing has resulted."

"IS Gaudet in town?" asked Elon.

"We traced him to Marseilles three days ago, where my men have him under constant surveillance."

"And I noticed by the papers that Marie Denbaule left this morning for the same place, observed Elon.

"Yes," answered Flocon, with evident P. L. M. is growing at that terminus, and she is determined to stop it at all costs. Strike on that artery would paralyze the country."

"Flocon, I have never sympathized with the French government in its political troubles; for your system, with its ever-changing ministries, reeks of inefficiency. But the circulars which I have seen look like out-and-out Bolshevism, and if I can throttle that sinister influence I shall be serving America as well as France. Furthermore, this personal danger to Marie Denbaule requires immediate action. Andrews and I will take the five-twenty for Marseilles tonight. Is Valonne still in charge down there?"

"Yes," answered Flocon, with evident relief.

"Wire him tonight an accurate account of the exact

VIBRATION, our scientists tell us, is life. Where there is no vibration there can be no life. On the other hand, too much vibration, as we all know, is likely to prove disastrous. Anyone who has been shaken back and forth rapidly for a length of time will testify to this simple statement. This fact is well brought out in the present story written by a well-known scientist and we know you will enjoy it.

times of first appearance of this inflammatory literature in every town that has been affected; also, as nearly as you can, a complete record of Gaudet's movements for the past month," said Elon, crisply. "I presume you have been keeping a close watch upon any influx from Moscow. These nation-wide strikes may possibly be a result of the Bolshevists' international campaign projected at their recent meeting in Bremen. The late trouble in Budapest bears all the marks of Krampdorff's crafty hand."

"Krampdorff" ejaculated Flocon. "He was reported killed in the attempted establishment of the first commune in Berlin, ten months ago!"

"My dear Flocon, criminal agents should not obtain their information from the newspapers," replied Elon, smiling coolly. "The poetic phraseology of this warning to Marie Denbaule reminds me strongly of Krampdorff's literary style, especially that peculiar construction, 'without compunction,' at the opening of a threatening sentence."

"But Gaudet's leadership of the Radicals, his absences, his unwonted silence, his known designs upon Camproger's portfolio—conclusions are obvious, surely. Hopkins, if you will net him as you did Owslench a year ago, the present ministry and, I may say, I personally, will owe you a great debt of gratitude," he added, ingratiatingly.

"No harm, Flocon," replied Elon, pleasantly. "Just wire Valonne the information I mentioned, and set your best men to find Krampdorff. Valonne can let you know the progress made. And Flocon," he concluded, his tone changing to one of incisive command, "if I detect the slightest laxity in your efforts to protect Marie Denbaule, I will throw up the case at once."

Elon and I hastily threw our necessary belongings into suitcases, checked out at the desk and stepped to the curb. A man flashed the badge and motioned us into a waiting car.

We were soon ensconced in the Marseilles express. Elon stretched his lank form diagonally across the narrow aisle that separated the white-clothed seats in the small compartment, and in a moment was puffing serenely at the curiously carved pipe without which he had never been photographed. His long chin sank down upon his chest until it touched the little black bow, while I surveyed the flying landscape, my own short legs bent at the knee and my feet on the edge of the seat before me. Suddenly he aroused me from contemplation of a cluster of little stone cottages.

"Andrews, Flocon may not have sufficient imagination to become a genuinely astute criminologist, but he does know psychology. Did you notice how apparent it was that he did not care to detail sufficient men to guard Denbaule?"

"He gave the impression that he was short of men."

"He has twice as many men as he really needs. But he was shrewd enough to see that, if the popular singer should actually be injured on account of her efforts to combat the strike propaganda, then the people would be so enraged against the invisible source of agitation that they would voluntarily return *en masse* to their work. Flocon is clever enough, but I think I made it clear that I consider human sacrifices to be out of date."

He lapsed into silence, while I tried to sleep. Suddenly he remarked:

"Andrews, I don't wonder that these people idolize Denbaule. She will sing tomorrow, despite a thousand threats, for she possesses the dominant spirit, without which the most perfect voice will fail to thrill an audience. You and I may solve a knotty problem by the application of science, yet we could not move a dozen persons. I estimate that in her five-year career, Denbaule has given her inspiration to 150,000 people, but ten days after our cold science resolves this national crisis, nobody will remember anything about it. But these stupid trains—here we are stopped again. They remind me of a game of checkers—not so long to move, but a long time between moves."

I settled myself to doze, for I knew from long experience that Elon was not contemplating the fruits of inspired temperament, as seriously as his conversation might indicate. Many times I had listened to his effusions about a thousand apparently unrelated subjects, only to hear him suddenly dart out a crisp sentence which showed that he had been unraveling a mystery all the time. I had often marveled at this power of abstraction, this ability to speak eloquently while his mind was relentlessly sifting out the essential from the non-essential and arranging the selected details in such logical order, that I wondered why I might not have deduced the simple solution of an apparently hopeless tangle of complications. I knew that back in his head he carried a picture of Denbaule, with her slim throat and large eyes, and that he would waste no time in solving a case which surrounded her with such personal danger. I dozed intermittently, and as I looked up from time to time I saw Elon examining a pamphlet under his lens or the written warning to Denbaule, and twice I was awakened by the rustling of a huge map. Once I muttered a profane reproach as he pulled me down flat upon the seat; but in a second I understood his action, for a heavy missile crashed through the window. Cautiously I peeped over the sill and saw a throng of workingmen rioting.

"Avignon," said Elon, quietly. "You slept through a nasty mess at Lyons."

From that moment the conductor disregarded the expostulations of fevered passengers who wished to leave at way-stations, and the engineer showed a fine indifference to the possibility of torn tracks.

The big station at Marseilles was almost deserted when we alighted at five-thirty in the morning, but Elon was in instant conversation with a colorless man whose head reminded me of a rodent animal. Elon introduced him as Valonne, head of the local branch of the service. As we stood just outside the railings in the underground train-shed a huge, rubber-tired truck, piled high with trunks, came bearing noiselessly upon us. Valonne saw it in time to shout a warning, and we jumped aside as it swept past and plunged through the heavy iron railings. Elon glanced quickly in the direction from which it had come, but saw no one, and remarked quietly to Valonne:

"Apparently you are not the only person who has received word from Paris since we left."

VALONNE shrugged his narrow shoulders and motioned us into his car. There was no disorder in the streets as we rode swiftly to the *Hotel des Deux Terres*. The boulevards were deserted except for small knots of workingmen conversing earnestly, yet one could not fail to be impressed with the diversity of this picturesque metropolis of the Mediterranean, with its massive buildings of white stone facing on broad boulevards which opened at intervals into incongruously narrow and dirty alleys.

"I'll get the data at your office at eight," said Elon, as Valonne attempted to detain him at the hotel entrance. "Now I must sleep."

Ten minutes after registering, we reposed comfortably in bed. I found myself alone upon waking, and my hand rustled against a note on Elon's vacant pillow.

"Andrews: Meet me at south entrance to Sunshine Park at one-thirty. In meantime go to Margulier et Fils, 47 Allée de Meilhan, and have 500 dodgers printed, 12 by 18 centimeters, dull paper, every letter in ten-point caps, bold face. Must be ready by noon tomorrow. Here is the copy:

Unprecedented Sale

Fleece-Lined Ermine Robes

Every dealer selling genteel evening robes will err greatly if he does not attend our remarkable auction sale of fleece-lined ermine garments. Every robe guaranteed perfect, free from defects, quality unexcelled, invisible seams. Small deposit and credit fee ensure September delivery. Sale extends three evenings, May 16-18, eight to ten.

Andrews and Henbee,
American Furriers,
14 rue Endemonee."

I read the copy with amazement. Whom was he now seeking, that he should lure him to a furrier's auction sale at this season? Why such accurate specifications of type? I read the note again, testing whether our usual code for ephemeral notes would shed light upon the mystery, but reversing the words by threes made no sense. I dressed quickly, snatched coffee and rolls in a café next door, and sought the *Alée de Meilhan.*

The address led me to the old quarter just west of the main wharves. I passed rapidly along an odoriferous street where ear-ringed women sold fresh bread and stale fish, and entered a tiny establishment. A boy was operating a small hand-press and a bent old man wearing a green eye-shade leaned over the only type-case in the room. He listened attentively while I explained my wishes, and promised to have the job ready at ten the next morning, although he stipulated a bonus for the rush feature.

I now found myself amidst a mass of speculation which led me nowhere. I wondered whether Elon had already cornered Gaudet, whether Krampdorff was in Marseilles and what red ring might be associated with him, and again I repeated the singular wording of the advertisement which Margulier was setting up. But involuntarily my thoughts came back to condemn Flocon for his half-veiled willingness to allow Denbaule to appear unprotected as champion of order. I caught her name in the two-inch head of a newsboy's paper, and found the entire front page of *Le Travailleur* given over to a raging protest against the proprietor of Sunshine Park. One paragraph was outstanding in its virulence:

"Jacobs deserves ruin, for against the tide of the People's upward rush he arranges a Denbaule demonstration. And the popular favorite is a thousand times a traitor in directing her influence against the masses whose acclamations have raised her to the pinnacle. We earnestly hope that Denbaule will cease her misguided efforts; but, if she continues, the sacrifice of a superb artist will not be too much to further our cause."

While I was still some distance from the park I saw a great steel spire towering in the air, and knew that it must be the thriller which had created a sensation when installed a week previously in the pleasure-garden, modeled after the resorts of New York. As I approached the entrance I saw the lofty shaft begin to swing slowly through the air, and I speculated upon the probable sensations of the two passengers who swayed back and forth on the tip of a slender spire as tall as a three-story building. I forced my way through a dense throng chattering volubly about the approaching Denbaule appearance and found Elon near the South entrance. He was watching a group discharging arrows at a live pigeon tethered by a one-foot rope to the tip of a flag-pole, at a franc for five shots.

"Not such bad shots, these Frenchmen," he remarked. "They have had to change the pigeon four times in the last half—" He stopped suddenly, as a loud roar burst from the mob which thronged the grounds. "Ah, I couldn't stop her."

I followed his gaze to the clubhouse veranda, across which a small party was making its way towards the steps. Even with my view obstructed by the hats, which filled all open spaces between amusement booths, I recognized Denbaule's loose hair and large eyes. The crowd gave way to permit the passage of the little party, while a shrill-voiced barker continued his shouting:

"Ride the Swaying Thriller! Get the vibration of a life-time! Feel the new sensation! Step right up and buy your tickets! One more ride before Denbaule sings!"

The group had now reached the entrance of the vibrator. I recognized Valonne at Denbaule's side, but I had never seen the dapper Jew. Elon whispered that he was Jacobs, manager of the resort. I caught a quick exchange of recognition between Elon and Denbaule, and knew that his morning program had included an interview with her. She made a striking figure, for she held her slender body erect, and her white shoulders and slim neck shone in sharp relief above a dark dress over-netted with black lace. Her black eyes flashed fearless greeting to the workmen who pressed about, and she smiled gaily; but I noticed dark circles under her eyes and remembered her almost incessant activity of the past three weeks. The party disappeared into a tall wooden structure which rose at the side of the towering spire, and I turned my attention to the novel amusement device from which Denbaule was scheduled to sing.

The lofty steel shaft rose vertically to a height of fully sixty-five feet above the concrete foundation in which it was fixed. It was about four feet thick at the base, and from this width it tapered upwards as a slim pyramid. The tip of the spire bore a canopied structure large enough to hold easily the two chairs which were fastened to it, one at each side of the pole. Close to the bottom, fifteen feet from the ground, the largest electro-magnet I had ever seen was built into a massive foundation. The magnet must have weighed two tons, and I reflected upon the immensity of the magnetic force which would be required to deflect the huge column and so start its vibrations. At the side of the shaft stood a tall, slender wooden structure containing an elevator, obviously for the purpose of conveying passengers to the platform near the tip of the spire.

"It's a weird contrivance," I remarked to Elon. "Spectacular, perhaps, but how anyone can enjoy—"

"Andrews, you should use your imagination," he interrupted. "It embodies motion, novelty and sudden change, which are at the root of every successful amusement device. When I was a boy I used to sit perched in the top of a tall Lombardy poplar overlooking the bay, and as the wind blew I swayed back and forth and dreamed of adventures way off beyond that rolling sea—where we are now, Andrews. Jacobs executed a stroke of vision when he commercialized this familiar sensation. But I can't quite understand why he risks the popularity of his resort by arranging this counter-strike demonstration. Hear that muttering."

An ominous rumble superseded the varied exclamations, and I looked up to see the figure of Denbaule standing at ease on the platform high in the air. Her huge Newfoundland dog stood looking down gravely over the edge of the platform. Jacobs stepped to Denbaule's side and motioned for silence, but the in-

censed crowd was in no mood for introductory remarks. He hesitated, but Denbaule made an imperative gesture and we saw the gangplank lowered to form a bridge from the platform to the ledge at the foot of the chairs on the tip of the spire. Two attendants strapped Denbaule into one of the upholstered chairs and the dog into the other at her back. The gangplank rose, and Denbaule lifted her ostrich fan in signal to the operator on the ground. I looked across to the enclosure and saw him close the switch of the electro-magnet.

Involuntarily the crowd burst into cheers as the free end of the steel tree began to swing slowly through the air, but leaders among them hissed loudly and the cheering stopped. In a few seconds the magnet had brought the swaying column to its full amplitude, and Denbaule rocked back and forth with gentle rhythm. The motion reminded me of a long rope swing turned upside down to defy the laws of gravity, for Denbaule moved at high speed in the center of the arc and then gradually slowed down until at the end of each swing she changed direction so gently that I knew there could be no strain upon the straps which held her safely in her lofty perch.

Suddenly the crowd hushed to listen, and the mellow tones of the soprano floated down upon a scene as quiet as the interior of a bank vault. Instead of directing her song towards heaven, as I had seen her do on the stage, Denbaule was now bending forward as much as the straps would permit, and she sang *The Prayer* from *La Tosca* directly into the upturned ears of a larger audience than she had ever before commanded. She reached the end of her song, held her gaze steadfast upon the crowd for a full thirty seconds, then spoke.

"My poor countrymen, are you hungry?"

No reply was ventured. The tip of the rod swung back to its other limit, returned, then Denbaule spoke again.

"Are your aged parents comfortable?"

This time there were a few rough cries. "No! No!" as if the leaders had recovered their wits and wished to break the spell; but Denbaule continued, at the end of the next swing of the lofty vibrator, which thus seemed to punctuate her simple remarks with dramatic emphasis.

"Are your children suffering?"

"Yes," came in stronger chorus, then one loud voice shouted, "We want the money of the parasites, we want—"

"Then why don't you go back to work and earn it honestly?" came the reply, smooth and clear, yet as full of feeling as if straight from the heart without passing through the throat.

The raucous voice attempted to answer, but a hundred approving shouts ascended to down out the objector. Elon grasped my elbow and pointed to the tip of the vibrating spire.

"See—it's speeding up!"

HE dashed off and I saw him struggling furiously to make way through the crowd. The rough workingmen whom he thrust aside mistook him for a protestant against their beloved singer, and I saw his progress impeded by a dozen hands. I tried to follow but the surging mass was impenetrable. Before my eyes the gentle sway of the huge vibrator had become a jerking shake. I could not make out Denbaule's expression as she swished back and forth in shorter and shorter arcs, and faster and faster. She shrieked, more poignantly than I had ever heard, and the dog at her back howled piteously. The crowd stared aghast at the tragedy taking place before its eyes. Jacobs jumped to the front of the platform and called excitedly to the operator on the ground. I looked over to the enclosure and saw that the operator had disappeared.

I struggled fruitlessly to get to the switch, but saw Elon finally vault inside the enclosure and shut it off. Denbaule's cries had ceased, and now jets of red spurted from nose and mouth every time the violent reversal of motion occurred at the ends of the short arc in which she swished.

Gradually the motion slackened. The great shaking rod came finally to rest and eager attendants lifted the unconscious girl from her chair. Even at that distance I could see that the delicate oval of her face was streaked with red. Quickly she was brought down in the elevator, and a doctor from the crowd pronounced her dead.

All was now confusion, but the awed exclamations on every side showed that even in death the beautiful singer had served the cause she fought for, and it was evident that the reaction which Flocon had anticipated would set in by the next morning. The set expression on Elon's face showed that even he felt the tragedy deeply.

It was five minutes after we reached our room before he spoke. Then his tone was one of bitter self-reproach.

"I should have had Valonne lock her up."

"But how could anyone foresee such an accident?" I exclaimed.

"Nothing happens without a cause, Andrews, and when Denbaule was so hated in certain quarters—" He paused, then lit his pipe and snatched his hat. "They have given us something more definite, now, if we can only read the signs." He even smiled, and as we strode rapidly towards Valonne's headquarters he asked me suddenly:

"Did you order the dodgers?"

"Margulier promised them for ten tomorrow."

"And the type?"

"Ten-point caps, bold face."

"Good. But here we are."

He brushed aside formalities.

"Valonne, I understand that Professor Jules Langevon invented the Swaying Thriller and sold it to Jacobs. I want you to come with me to see him."

"Faculty of Science," Elon instructed Valonne's chauffeur, and shortly we stopped before one of the most imposing of the University buildings. It was seven o'clock and the halls were quite deserted, but an attendant directed us to the end of a dark corridor.

"Professor Langevon is engaged in research there," he said, pointing. "Knock before opening the door, for he is working with very delicate apparatus which must not be disturbed."

Elon knocked impatiently and a gruff response came quickly:

"Who is there?"

"Valonne, of the Secret-Service. He wishes to consult you in a scientific matter."

"You will have to return in the morning," replied the voice. "All the measurements will be ruined if that door is opened now."

"The matter is very urgent, my dear Professor. I must beg you to see us at once," replied Elon.

"Impossible," came the curt answer. "Good-bye."

Elon threw open the door, disclosing a scene that was hardly scientific. A woman of about thirty-five sprang from the lap of a bearded man in dirty laboratory robe, and the professor rose in unconcealed rage. Elon cut short his exlamations.

"Hopkins is my name, this is Mr. Andrews, and this is M. Valonne, with whose name you are undoubt-

edly familiar. You are the inventor of the thriller that has just killed Denbaule, and we must insist upon examining your laboratory."

Professor Langevon threw up his hands in speechless wrath. The woman had meanwhile slipped from the room. Elon drew his automatic and eyed it contemplatively; and the professor, now a more dignified figure, than when startled in his amorous adventure, calmed at once.

"You are welcome, gentlemen, although you are doubtless aware that your unceremonious entrance into my private laboratory requires an apology."

"We shall appreciate your kindness very much, Professor," replied Elon. "Ah, this is the apparatus with which you have performed your celebrated researches on reciprocating motion," he exclaimed, pointing to a motor whose driving rod was attached to a small, box-like carriage which stood on two rails.

"Quite so," returned Langevon, mollified. "You see how it operates."

He closed a switch and the carriage ran back and forth on the rails.

"Most ingenious, Professor. And now may I have a large rubber bag filled with water?"

"Certainly," responded Langevon, with evident surprise. "I noticed one of the boys mending a football bladder in the workshop. Will that do?"

Elon nodded assent, and Langevon returned in a moment with the oval bag filled with water. Elon hung it freely in the center of the carriage, then started the motor and gradually advanced the control. The carriage oscillated to and fro with increasing speed, so that the bag swung against one end of the carriage and then the other. Water squirted from the valve at each bump. As the oscillations became more rapid, the force of the bumps increased, and finally the bag burst. Elon's eye lit, but he said only:

"A striking demonstration of inertia, Professor. A thousand thanks for your kindness."

"You saw what would happen to a human heart?" he asked, as we were again in our room.

"You mean the experiment with the rubber bag?"

"Exactly. As soon as the speed of the thriller reached a certain limit the changes of direction at the ends of the swings were so sudden that Denbaule's heart was bumped forcibly against the walls of the thoracic cavity, and finally the valves burst. You recall the spurts of blood?"

I saw it all in a flash, but he was speaking again.

"Now we know that the effect of vibrating too rapidly could easily be predicted. Here is the next step."

He had erected a thin rod of spring steel vertically upon a wooden base. He connected a dry cell to an electro-magnet at the bottom, and the rod swayed back and forth. It was, in fact, a miniature Swaying Thriller. Occasionally he changed the position of a sliding weight which he had clamped to the rod, and took observations with a stop-watch. I observed that the nearer the weight was to the tip, the more slowly the rod vibrated, but while I was trying to draw some connection, he rose quickly.

"And now to examine the shaft."

The park lay in complete darkness when we reached it, but nevertheless Elon maneuvered cautiously before scaling a fence near the looming spire. He took a coil of insulated wire from his grip, quickly climbed a pole and connected the wires to the two power lines which fed the park. He brought the loose ends to ground, attached two rods, then in a trice was ascending the narrow ladder attached to the steel column. At intervals he tapped cautiously with a hammer, then I saw a blinding flash as he touched the rods together against the side of the shaft. I knew that he was melting a hole through the steel with his electric arc and platinum electrodes which had been of such service in the Fulton Bank case. He withdrew the electrodes, inserted calipers, and called:

"8.2 centimeters; take it down."

He made measurements at intervals of six feet, while I tabulated the figures that he gave me. He returned quickly to the ground after the last measurement, disconnected the wires, packed his tools and returned to the hotel, where he plunged into calculations which covered sheet after sheet. I watched for a few minutes, interested in the curious symbols, but finally threw myself upon the bed.

IT was nine in the morning when I awoke, but the electric lights were still burning brightly and the carpet was covered with a deep layer of penciled papers. Elon bent over the table, a cup of black coffee at his elbow. I heard him murmur:

"13.5, too low, too low—but there's nothing else."

"You snored fearfully," he exclaimed, looking towards me. "Get those dodgers this morning and meet me for dinner at the Palais Crystal, at six-thirty."

He jammed his hat on his head and strode out, leaving me to speculate upon the significance of the figure 13.5. Margulier had the dodgers ready promptly at ten, and as I returned to the hotel I heard newsboys crying the tragedy. One paragraph especially interested me:

"Government engineers testified that such a shaft can vibrate at only one speed, which is determined entirely by its rigidity and distribution of weight; and they set up apparatus which showed that the only effect of the magnet is to maintain the natural rate of the rod. Their testimony proved that the accident was due to crystallization of the steel under the enormous stresses involved. Examination of the shaft this morning revealed a series of small holes apparently made with a welding torch, but these were held to have had no effect. The manager of the park, Mr. Jacobs, as well as the inventor, Prof. J. Langevon, were completely exonerated, and the shaft is being strengthened for an early re-opening."

Elon was taciturn at supper, merely stating that we would have an interesting expedition during the evening, and I wondered whether, after all, there was any connection between Denbaule's death and the venomous propaganda. We smoked leisurely until nine, watching the colorful diners seated under the glass canopy of the sidewalk café; then Valonne called with two of his men, and the five of us motored out the road that skirted the bay. Elon watched the shore closely and halted us in a cluster of trees about four miles from town.

Half an hour later a heavy truck stopped directly opposite our hiding place. Four men alighted and dragged two cylinders to the water-front. The moonlight shone upon them as they attached a long hose to the nozzle of each tank; then we heard the muffled wheezing of pressure suddenly released. The breeze brought a pungent odor to our nostrils, and Elon whispered laconically:

"Chlorine."

Presently he pressed the key of a small wireless sender in the automobile, and almost immediately a lighted launch moved closer to shore. The four men stopped work with sharp ejaculations of disappointment, hastily re-loaded the cylinders and turned the truck towards town. We trailed them at a safe distance.

The lumbering truck led us straight to Sunshine Park. Elon cautiously followed them towards the clubhouse, then motioned us to come on. He led us into what seemed to be an employee's entrance and halted beside a sink in a basement lavatory. Stooping, he

fingered among the pipes leading down from the sink, then in the semi-gloom we saw a small door swing inwards. Elon wriggled through the narrow opening, and we followed him down the large corridor into which we had emerged. He held up a hand in warning, then darted at full speed around the corner.

Four men jumped as if shot, only to face five leveled revolvers. Elon advanced quickly and handcuffed the four two by two.

"I think this is all of them, Valonne," remarked Elon, with a smile of satisfaction, "but your men might guard that entrance."

I looked again at the four men who stood against the wall. One I recognized immediately as Jacobs, manager of the resort. Manacled to him was an immensely tall and emaciated man, clad in a dignified black frock coat. His singularly bearded and massive head towered above the cringing Jew at his side. The other men were garbed as workers, with bare forearms and dirty hands. Their faces revealed merely the stolid indifference of stupidity.

Elon walked quickly to the single typecase that stood between two hand-presses, and fitted every letter from one of the compartments into a printer's type-assembler. He mounted the type in a form, ran off a proof and examined it eagerly under his glass.

"Valonne, the case is now complete," he remarked quietly. "You may arrest Jacobs, Krampdorff and their two helpers as murderers and revolutionary plotters."

"It's a lie!" shouted Jacobs, his face blanched and knees sagging, but Krampdorff said coolly:

"My dear Professor Hopkins, perhaps you will tell us by what right you enter our private workroom and address us as murderers? Surely you realize that you have no evidence to substantiate such charges."

"The French Government may use its own discretion about the revolutionary literature with which these racks are filled," said Elon, grimly, snatching one of the folders from a shelf, "but, as for myself, I shall enjoy seeing you electrocuted for the murder of Marie Denbaule."

He turned quickly to Valonne.

"I owe you some explanation, my dear Valonne. I will trace the evidence briefly. I had no sooner come to Marseilles than I noticed the dodgers which Jacobs had issued to advertise Sunshine Park, and I observed the same peculiarly ragged scratch across the face of one capital E that I had seen in the revolutionary dodgers. You are aware, of course, that under the microscope such minute scratches are as distinctive as the finger-print of criminals.

"Naturally this aroused my suspicion, Valonne, but you informed me that the printer whose name appeared at the bottom of the amusement dodgers had just been raided without result. The obvious conclusion was that the printer of the amusement dodgers was using Marguiler's name as a blind. In order to test this point I had dodgers, overloaded with E's, printed at Margulier's shop."

He exhibited one of the *furrier* dodgers.

"You will note, Valonne, the preponderance of E's. In average copy the percentage of E's is slightly under 9; so I judged that 24 per cent, almost 1 in every 4 letters, would exhaust his small stock of type and thus show whether the scratched E was in his possession. The microscope reveals no evidence of it.

"This was sufficient to center suspicion upon Sunshine Park, but in the meantime the murder had occurred. A simple experiment proved that a skillful scientist could easily predict the physiological effect of vibrating too rapidly. It is well known that the rate of vibration of a rigid shaft depends only upon its rigidity and distribution of weight. I found by a mathematical investigation that 3,798 pounds of material must be removed from the upper part of the shaft in order to increase its rate from 30 to 180 vibrations per minute which were the values I had noted at the park, and the double fact that the acceleration had occurred gradually and in public indicated that this material must have *flowed* down from the *interior* of the shaft after being released by a timed valve. I found that the upper half of the shaft contained a hollow space of 4.5 cubic feet, and by simple division I ascertained that the material removed must have weighed 844 pounds to the cubic foot. In other words, its density with 13.5. There is no liquid possessing *exactly* this density; but mercury, commonly known as quicksilver, has a density of 13.6, and I concluded that perhaps the hollow space had not been truly conical, as I had assumed in my calculations.

"The simplest method of removing this mercury while thousands were looking was to allow it to run into the sewer, so I expected to find it at the outlet of that particular trunk, fifty feet west of Pointe Cochon. It was quite clear that we were dealing with criminals of the highest intellectual calibre, so I anticipated an effort to remove the mercury from the little depression on the bottom of the bay at the sewer's mouth, where the metallic fluid must remain on account of its density. You know the remaining details, Valonne. Our auxiliary on the launch interrupted the chemical experiment of these worthies, which consisted simply in pumping compressed chlorine gas into the pool of mercury. The mercuric chloride formed by chemical reaction would dissolve in the surrounding water. Thus your men will find some mercury left as evidence and perhaps some dead fish, also, floating upon the surface of the water; for mercuric chloride, dissolved in water, is a deadly poison."

"But Gaudet?" stammered Valonne, completely dumbfounded by Elon's rapid fire of revelations.

"You may wire Camproger to beware of Gaudet's underground political activities; but, as regards the complications of the last few weeks, Gaudet does not possess the requisite mental acumen. And Valonne, continued Elon, glancing at Jacobs, "you may find this pamphlet useful in your case against Jacobs. If I had run across it sooner in the library I should have been spared the trouble of solving an excessively difficult differential equation. My compatriot here, I am sorry to admit, filled the chair of Physics in the College of New York until 1916, when he was expelled on account of his radical socialistic activities."

Valonne grasped the pamphlet and I looked over his shoulder. On the title-page appeared the caption: "'A Paper Presented Before the New York Academy of Science, entitled: 'The Vibration of a Rigid Shaft as a Function of its Rigidity and Distribution of Weight —A Mathematical Study.'"

THE END.

The SECOND SWARM

By J. Schlossel

THE sun had just sunk behind the hills in the west along the Atlantic seaboard of North America when into the upper reaches of the Earth's atmosphere from the southeast not far from the spot in the horizon where presently Sirius in all of its splendor would rise, there suddenly shot a long, slender meteor-like object. It sped through the highly rarefied outermost stratum of air with such speed that it glowed red in an instant. It did not follow the usual path of a shooting star, but seemed to rise. Holding a course near the top of the ocean of air which must have been parallel with the curvature of the Earth, it sped northwest. Like a blood-red streak it was traveling across the darkening sky. From the spot in the heavens where the first had made its sudden appearance, five more meteor-like objects in a straight row, equally distanced from each other, plunged into our gaseous envelope, glowed red as blood, and followed the course of the first. Behind them came a row of five more, then five more. Steadily and silently they came into view, row after row. Their silent passage was ominous.

As if by a signal, a myriad ships of air of every conceivable shape and size shot up into the air from the surface of the water along the Atlantic shore, ready to leap into the air. Almost immediately they were joined by thousands from the land. Straight up they rose with astonishing swiftness. Mighty telescopes in huge observatories at various elevated points of the Earth had picked out and counted them—one hundred and one in all—and studied them as they drew near. Long before those meteor-like objects had become visible to the naked eye. Their formation and their course marked them plainly for what they were. From the countless ships of air, as they rose to meet the strange visitors, there broke forth a roar of artillery which grew in volume and fury as their distance from the meteor-like objects lessened.

FOR sheer daring and power of imagination. The Second Swarm will remain for years to come, a great outstanding work in scientifiction.

An interplanetary story such as this has never before been imagined. It is true that other stories have carried us to other planets and even to other universes, but never before has any author pictured them with such daring and such depth of imagination as this.

We consider it one of the greatest interplanetary stories that has come along in years, and we know it will be accepted by you as such.

The myriad ships that had leapt up from the surface of both land and water were left behind before they had risen more than a few miles in the air. The meteor-like objects—mile-long interstellar ships—gradually slackening their speed, continued to hurtle in a northwesterly direction. The red glow that enveloped each as it shot into the highly rarefied upper stratum of air was fading as their speed dropped still further. But even yet mere earthly distances were being wiped out with amazing swiftness at the terrific velocity with which they were still traveling.

As these interstellar ships neared a large, densely populated city which was partially hidden from view by some heavy, low-flying clouds, pale-yellow beams made their appearance pointing upwards from the topmost pinnacles of its highest towers. The upward progress of those beams seemed to be visibly retarded by the air. A powerful sucking sound could be heard in the neighborhood of those high towers. Around each of the beams a miniature whirlwind was beginning to revolve slowly. The air became golden and hazy. The powerful sucking sound became a roar of rushing wind. The heart of the city around the towers seemed to be in the grip of a tornado. Of the heavy clouds only some tiny feathery specks remained. One by one the pale-yellow beams were shut off and the wind began to die down.

The interstellar ships were almost at the edge of the outskirts of the city now. The first, the one in the lead, shot across the heart of the city. Suddenly, from some of the lower towers, there darted heavenwards twin beams of curiously scintillating green rays. Those green rays seemed far from dangerous, yet they feared them and gave all large cities a wide berth after this.

As those mighty interstellar ships shot across the first series of mountain ranges, colossal guns thundered from below. Man's forces of destruction were being loosened in all their fury. From far in the northwest toward which the interstellar ships were heading, there began to rise thousands upon thousands, wave upon wave, of ships of air belching flame and metal, in a terrific effort to bar their progress as the interstellar ships drew near, but neither the ships of air nor their projectiles could reach the high altitude at which the others were traveling.

The twenty rows of interstellar ships with their leader far in front, paying little attention to the thousands of ships that were trying to stop them, passed swiftly on. The thousands of terrestrial ships turned in swift pursuit, but the interstellar ships were traveling too high and too fast for them. Though they were left behind, from every valley and plain the earthly ships rose in their thousands, with the guns roaring, and followed doggedly. There seemed to be no end of them. They rose in tireless waves until they passed the fifty-fifth degree latitude north. Above that latitude they ceased to rise.

The gap between the first row of those ships of air and the last row of interstellar ships began to increase rapidly. The interstellar ships were now flying parallel with the Rocky Mountains. Suddenly mammoth pieces

The pale yellow glow which emanated from Commander Keelen's ship touched the sphere lightly seemed to caress it . It spread over the sphere, like m lten gold, until it had enveloped it The sphere seemed to vibrate, became indistinct was gone—destroyed The glow ies hed ov r and touch d spice One and then another of the interstellar ships from Earth met the bolts in headlong collision Commander Keelen's mighty ship struck a globular ship of space There was a brilliant flare of light and both ships went up in a blinding, white-hot mass of flaming gas.

of artillery on the mountain plateaus and snow-covered peaks in their path began to thunder madly. Each mile over which they were passing was being contested fiercely, desperately, yet it had no visible effect upon the interstellar ships that had plunged into the Earth's atmosphere from out of the depths of space and followed their course against all opposition of man. In a way, man's efforts to stop them seemed like some futile attempts of hordes of tiny ants.

As the countless ships of air neared the forlorn wastes of the Arctic Circle, they began to wheel around and speed back. It appeared as if they dared go no further, as if the snow-covered wastes above the Arctic Circle were in alien hands.

The mighty interstellar ships, moving along at only a fraction of the velocity with which they had first entered the topmost layer of the atmosphere of Earth, continued on their course until they neared a region where many hundred interstellar ships patterned exactly after the hundred and one in the air, lay sunken in the snow in rows of ten.

Holding an even keel, the interstellar ships began to drop down from their great elevation until they were only one thousand feet above the surface, then slowly cruised along as if searching for a suitable place to land. A few miles from the shores of the Arctic Ocean a number of shallow depressions upon the ground came into view. They began to settle into them one by one.

As soon as they had eased themselves snugly down, long metal gangways were run out and men, heavily clad and with packs upon their backs and weapons in their hands, began to pour forth from each ship.

The men moved around their respective ships for a while, then formed themselves into orderly ranks and marched swiftly along the roads of snow to the square openings which led underground. They carried their large packs easily. Their bearing and the way they held their weapons bespoke long training. Yet they were all very young, hardly out of their 'teens.

Among them there rose a faint murmur of discontent. They were growing tired of these everlasting practice trips, and longed for some real action, something with real danger. They knew how to handle the ships perfectly now, and they hated this perpetual training that was making mere automatons of them all. Some who could see no reason for complaint, were saying they would soon get action, plenty of it, when the appointed day finally dawned. But meanwhile, it was exciting enough plunging out of the depths of space from far beyond the orbit of Neptune at a terrific velocity; circling the four dead moons of Uranus and dropping many tons of powerful explosives and deadly gas-forming chemicals upon their barren surfaces as if attacking; veering sharply as they approached too close to the neighborhood of Saturn—that wondrous ringed planet with its family of moons—a miniature solar system in itself—and sending from each ship a stream of missiles containing explosives of an atomic nature at the tiny moonlets which composed the rings, causing them to disrupt their equilibrium and crash into each other; dodging the asteroids, fragments of an exploded planet which once had its orbit between that of Mars and mighty Jupiter, and which now occupied an entire region.

THIS was the year 12,000 of the New Era, the year preceding that which the inhabitants of Earth had been looking forward to for nearly a thousand years. At the beginning of the next year, the Second Great Expedition was to be launched into the infinity of space to pass beyond the orbit of Neptune. Even now everything was ready, only waiting the word to go. The men and women who were going were trained until they could be trained no more, the ships were built and ready. Supplies were now being stowed into those ships.

Sirius, the brightest star in the heavens viewed from the surface of the Earth, rose slowly in the east. Men and women began to point it out to each other as it rose above the horizon and nodded to each other as their lips framed the word—"Soon." Ever since it was ascertained—at a terrible cost to human life—that around that bright star there revolved a planet capable of sustaining life such as exists on Earth, man has gazed covetously up at it as he prepared for a certain day in the future—the second day of the coming year—when the forces of man would leave Earth in a mighty swarm to add yet another world to his slowly expanding domain.

When the Second Great Expedition was first planned, following the complete success of the first which had gone toward Alpha Centauri and now occupied two of the nineteen planets which revolved around that star, scouting expeditions were sent out to seven of the nearer stars to investigate. They realized that the distance of twenty-five light years from the solar system would be the absolute limit to which any expedition could be sent at the present day with any hope of success. The nearer the star, of course, the greater the chances of success in the event that the selected planet was inhabited and the inhabitants resented the invasion of man.

Blue-white Vega toward which the solar system was hurtling at the rate of one million miles a day and the giant orange-hued Arcturus in the constellation of Bootes were believed to be just at the extreme limit. Then came white-hot Formalhaut in Piscis Australis at the distance of twenty-three light years from the solar system. Next in distance was Altair in Aquila at sixteen light years from Earth. Procyon in Canis Minor was accredited with the distance of twelve light years; Sirius in Canis Major at the distance of nine light years, and 61 Cygni, the sixth magnitude star in the constellation of Sygnus, at the distance of eight and a half light years are the three nearest of the seven.

A scouting expedition of two interstellar ships was considered enough to send to each of the seven selected stars. Six interstellar ships capable of making a round trip to any distance up to thirty light years from the solar system were planned and built. A driving mechanism producing rays powerful enough to hurtle them along at two-thirds the speed of light through the utter void of space between the stars was installed in each of them. The three farthest stars of the seven was their destination. They left the Earth in the order of the distance they had to travel so that they would all return around the same period.

Two more interstellar ships were completed and twenty-one years later they left for Altair in the constellation of Aquila. Twelve years elapsed before the expedition for Procyon in Canis Minor was on its way. The expedition for Sirius started nine years later. The last of the seven scouting expeditions was toward 61 Cygni in Cygnus which started a year and a half later.

Each of the four scouting expeditions that had gone toward Arcturus, Vega, Formalhaut, and Altair had three separate complete crews who worked their ships in rotation. Each of the crews operated their ships for a period of years. While one of the crews worked the ship, the other two were sunk in a lethargic state

which resembled suspended animation. The lethargic state was induced by drugs, and conserved life—held life in abeyance. The expeditions whose destinations had been toward Procyon, 61 Cygni, and Sirius had but two sets of complete crews each.

The first of the scouts to return were the two ships that had gone toward 61 Cygni in Cygnus. Their report was that only one tiny dark body, or planet, revolved around that star at a distance of near three billion miles, and that it had a surface temperature of only a few degrees above absolute zero. It would never be able to support life of any kind.

The next to return was the expedition that had gone toward Procyon in Canis Minor. Their report was that around that yellow star, besides the faintly luminous companion of sunlike dimensions which could be made out from Earth, there revolved eleven planets, three of which were accompanied by satellites. From the standpoint of life, such as exists on Earth, all except one of the eleven had orbits which were either too close or too far from that luminary. The planet whose orbit was situated at the best distance for both heat and light also had a dense gaseous envelope, or atmosphere. Seen from the distance of a few million miles, it appeared to be just the world that man was seeking as the goal of the Second Great Expedition; but, on landing, it was found to lack one of the chief essentials necessary for the support of life—such as exists upon the surface of the world where man originated—oxygen in the atmosphere.

Exactly at forty-eight hours of each other the expeditions that had gone toward Vega and Formalhaut were sighted. But before they hove into view it was known that their quest for a world revolving around those two stars toward which the proposed Second Great Expedition could start was equally fruitless. The two ships that had gone Vegaward were the first to return to the surface of Earth. They found that Vega had a family of seven large primary planets still in a gaseous stage, the smallest of which was much larger than our own mighty Jupiter, and each was attended by numerous satellites whose size ranged from one hundred miles in diameter to a few with a diameter of five thousand miles. Water could not exist in its liquid state on any of those satellites because the heat they received from their primaries and from Vega was too great.

Around Formalhaut, too, were many planets, but the one which approached nearest in its resemblance to the Earth was still in an early evolutionary state that followed close upon the formation of a crust over a molten interior—the eruptive stage. Around those two stars there was no place for man—as yet.

The scouting expeditions that had gone toward Arcturus in the constellation of Bootes, Altair in Aquila, and Sirius in Canis Major were still to be heard of.

A YEAR and nine months after the expeditions from Vega and Formalhaut had returned, a message came to Earth from a small, slow-moving interstellar ship cruising near Neptune that a battered interstellar ship—one of the mile-long ships built for long distance travel—had been seen hurtling past Neptune on its way toward Earth at its greatest velocity and then suddenly had begun to act strangely. With diminishing speed it was swerving hither and thither as if no one were guiding it.

Large interstellar ships were dispatched from Earth to investigate. They came upon that battered interstellar ship between the orbits of Uranus and Saturn. Those who were on the lookout on the ships seeking it were the first to see that the whole forward end was riddled with large gaping holes. It was taken in tow and brought to Earth.

When it was forced open they found that not one human being of all three complete crews was alive inside that battered ship. Most of them had met instant death out there in the depths of space near Altair when the ship was struck. A few had managed to survive the shock and had barricaded themselves in the air-tight chambers which housed the driving apparatus and guiding mechanism.

There were hardly enough left to work the ship, yet it had to come back, for it was certain death to delay an attempt to repair the damage at the forward end of the ship.

Disregarding whatever might lie in their path, they drove the ship back at full speed. A thousand times they missed utter destruction by a hair's breadth. Before the accident the machinery had run smoothly and automatically, now the few survivors had to watch and repair it almost continuously to keep it from shaking itself apart.

Though the task would have been too much for even three times their number, they stuck it out for more than half the journey back. But flesh and blood can stand only so much, and one by one they began to drop from the ranks of the living. The ship had to return to Earth with its warning of what revolved around that star toward which it had been sent. The shrinking band of survivors drove themselves on and on. They watched their shipmates die, one by one. More than once did they wish that they had met death quickly when the ship had first been struck. The last of the crew dropped dead as the ship crossed the orbit of Neptune.

Of the two interstellar ships that had gone toward Altair in Aquila, only one, with its freight of dead, returned. The other had met in headlong collision with a small dark body about one hundred feet in diameter hurtling through space and was destroyed instantly. The second ship had nearly met a like fate. The only thing that saved them was the warning of the fate of the first. All that they had been able to find was that numerous dense swarms of planetoids, whose individual diameters ranged from only a few feet to many miles, revolved around Altair.

The expeditions that had gone toward Arcturus and Sirius were yet to be heard from. Great anxiety was felt for their safety. Four years dragged by after the battered ship of the ill-fated expedition to Altair had returned and still there was no sign of them. They were given up for lost. As the fifth year was drawing to a close, the scouting expedition that had gone toward the giant orange-hued Arcturus in Bootes returned with the information that at the distance of twenty-five light years from the solar system, the absolute limit set, Arcturus was still many light years away. Fearing that their provisions would not hold out, they did not even attempt to reach it.

The two ships that had gone toward Sirius in Canis Major were yet to be heard from. Years followed rapidly one after the other until a score had passed, and still no sign of that expedition. The belief that some accident had befallen it had crystallized into a certainty. An expedition of ten mighty interstellar ships started out toward Sirius to learn the fate of the others.

Twenty-eight years later one of the ten ships that had gone toward Sirius to investigate the disappearance of the first two came hurtling back to Earth as if it had had all the legions of the universe at its heels. Glowing blood-red, it shot through the atmosphere into the waters of the Atlantic Ocean near one

of the largest cities of North America and disappeared underneath the surface. It rose to the surface and came within a mile of the shore where its keel grated upon the bottom and there it came to a dead stop.

A number of ships of air hovering near made for it at once. A door was slid half open in the side of the interstellar ship and the form of a man swaddled from head to foot in what looked like dirty rags appeared for a moment in the opening. Seeing the ships of air drawing near, he made motions with his hands for them to keep away. They seemed to pay no attention to his signs, and continued to draw near. From the shore thousands of men and women were putting off toward the ship in every kind of available craft. The man standing in the half-open doorway of the interstellar ship moved back out of sight and snapped the door shut with a clang. A moment later there came a wireless warning to keep away from the ship, because those who were left of the crew were in the grip of some loathsome disease which they had contracted upon the surface of the only habitable world that circled Sirius.

A number of men of science and physicians were ordered to board the ship to study the disease. Officers from the department of Public Health were ordered to form a cordon around the plague ship with their airships until the physicians and scientists with their supplies had boarded the stricken vessel, then it was to be taken in tow to a lonely spot on the Atlantic coast and beached. No one was allowed to approach it under the penalty of being placed in quarantine aboard the interstellar ship until the disease germs were isolated and conquered.

This disease was of an exceedingly virulent nature. It attacked every living thing which was brought aboard for experimental purposes. No creature, cold- or warm-blooded, was immune. Once contracted, it ran its usual course, ending in death. In some cases the disease lasted for a few months, and in other cases it took many years to kill.

The disease was totally unknown to man. The physicians could do nothing for the remnant of the crew still surviving; they could only look on and make their sick as comfortable as possible. In some respects the disease resembled leprosy. As it neared its final stage, lumps of flesh rotted and fell from the living frame.

The physicians and scientists worked feverishly. Months went by and they seemed to make no progress. The crew were the first to go, then the physicians succumbed. Not until nearly all of the physicians and scientists who had boarded the ship—they had all contracted the disease within the first forty-eight hours—had died from it after years of tireless research, was the disease finally arrested and finally conquered by means of an antitoxin.

THE story that the crew gave out to the world was this: when the ten mighty interstellar ships drew near Sirius they slackened their speed a little until they neared the outermost planet revolving around that bright star. From a great height they circled it. Its atmosphere was hardly worthy of note. Man could not live upon that world, not unless he brought his air with him. The next three planets, in order, to Sirius were also unfit for human habitation for various reasons. There was something familiar about the fifth outermost planet. It had a ring around it that resembled Saturn's, composed of myriads of tiny moonlets. That fifth outermost planet also had an extensive atmosphere.

The ships drew swiftly near that world. It had the appearance of a wondrous jewel, worthy of all hardships. From the angle at which they were approaching the ring looked like two handles by which the Sirian world could be grasped. The moonlets which composed that ring ranged from a few hundred feet in diameter to about five miles. The larger masses of that ring were nearly all globular.

Hazy patches, which later became more distinct and were seen to be great bodies of water and land, seas and continents, could be made out on the surface. Drawing nearer, light and darker areas, barren tracts and regions covered with vegetation, stood out. Winding rivers and lakes could also be seen. Still nearer, large cities in the midst of the darker areas and at the shores of the seas came into view.

One after the other at the intervals of a minute or so the ten interstellar ships shot into its atmosphere. The friction of their passage through the most rarefied part of the gaseous envelope caused them to glow red. Almost as soon as they entered the atmosphere, thousands of tiny ships of air leapt up from the surface of both land and water in an effort to attack the ten ships that had come from out of the void, but they were traveling too high and too fast. From each of the tiny ships of air there came bright flashes as if they were discharging weapons which resembled the ancient artillery of man.

Crossing high over one of the cities in their path, the first interstellar ship in the lead dropped a little lower to see what manner of intelligent creatures built and inhabited it. The city, it was seen, was composed of huge masses of masonry; in its center were a few masses larger than the rest. And as the ship drew near those larger masses of masonry a strange beam of a dozen different blending hues leapt up and touched it. Though it was traveling at a high velocity, the ship came to a stop as if it had struck a slightly yielding but impenetrable barrier. It could neither go forward nor draw back. For a moment it hung motionless and then began to drop slowly down as if it were being pulled by some powerful magnetic force.

The interstellar ship, with its driving rays that were powerful enough to hurtle it along at two-thirds the speed of light, turned on full, tried to rise, to break away from the force that was drawing it down to the surface of that world, but it could not. There was an uncanny resemblance to a fly being caught securely in the sticky strands of a spider's web. Lower it was drawn and still lower. The other nine ships could do nothing. From other parts of the city there gleamed forth the same strange beams of blending light and the nine interstellar ships swerved from their course.

Those aboard this ship began to realize their danger. Their driving rays could not free them. They were very near the tops of the masses of masonry which composed the city. They got a confused view of the inhabitants, creatures nearly all arms and legs, scrambling away from the danger zone. Hardly a mile above the mass of masonry from which the beam came, the officers in command of that ship ordered a few of the largest bombs to be dropped. There was a roar and the mass of masonry directly underneath the ship was blown to bits.

The force which had been drawing the interstellar ship down disappeared with the destruction of the structure. It started to rise, but it did not get far, for it was instantly set upon by thousands of ships which clung to its surface like iron filings on a magnet. Their weight drew it low again. Near the center of the city there was a large cleared space and the strangers who clung to the interstellar ship were trying to draw it down to that spot. Before it reached

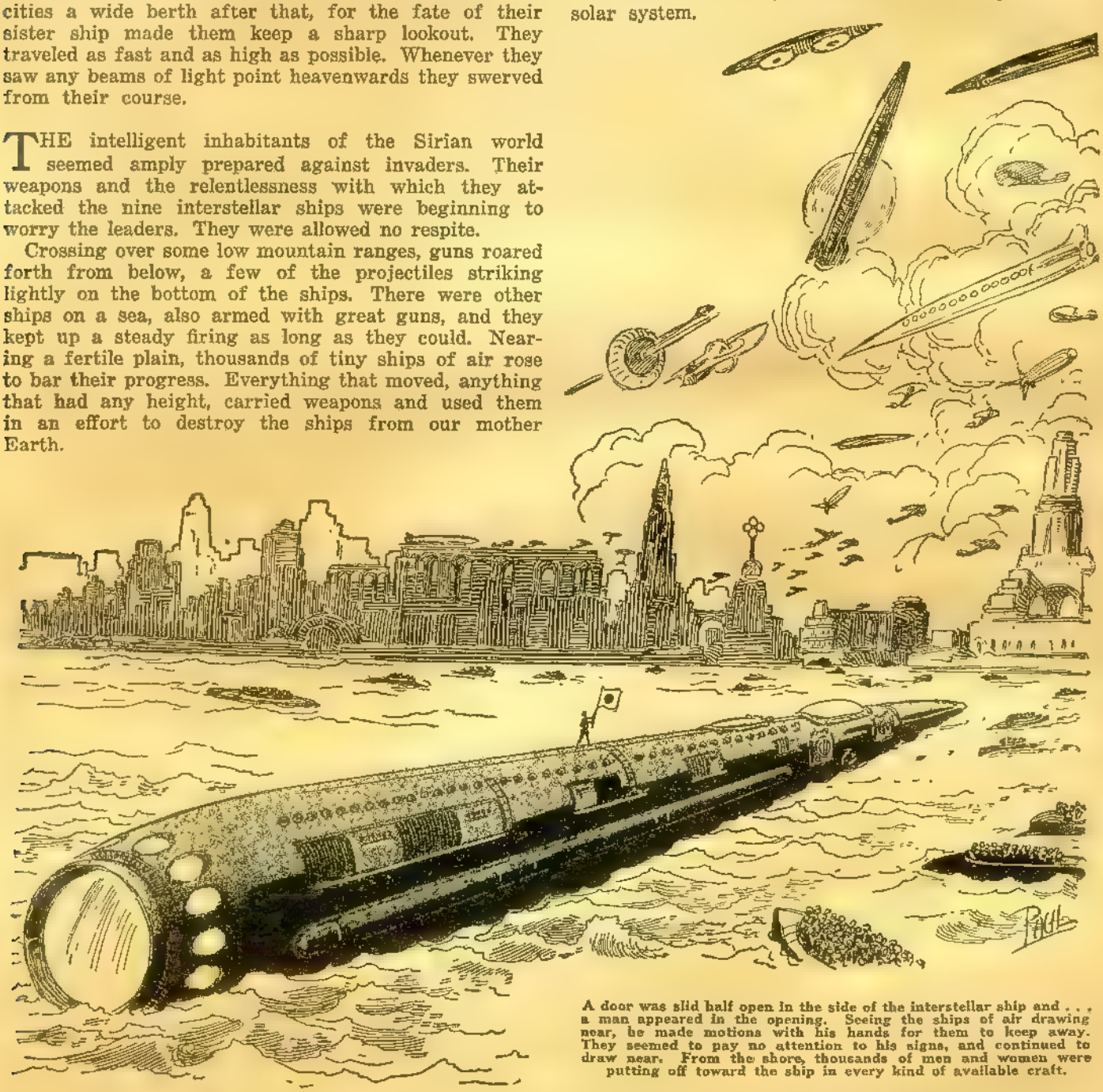
the ground, there was a mighty explosion and a great flare of blinding light, and a dense cloud of smoke and dust rose high in the air. The interstellar ship and the small ships of air that clung to it were destroyed. There was no sign of the city, except a deep hole in the ground, where the city stood. Whether the explosion came from the interstellar ship or from the ships of that world, it was impossible to say.

The nine remaining interstellar ships, as they continued on their course around the new world, gave all cities a wide berth after that, for the fate of their sister ship made them keep a sharp lookout. They traveled as fast and as high as possible. Whenever they saw any beams of light point heavenwards they swerved from their course.

THE intelligent inhabitants of the Sirian world seemed amply prepared against invaders. Their weapons and the relentlessness with which they attacked the nine interstellar ships were beginning to worry the leaders. They were allowed no respite.

Crossing over some low mountain ranges, guns roared forth from below, a few of the projectiles striking lightly on the bottom of the ships. There were other ships on a sea, also armed with great guns, and they kept up a steady firing as long as they could. Nearing a fertile plain, thousands of tiny ships of air rose to bar their progress. Everything that moved, anything that had any height, carried weapons and used them in an effort to destroy the ships from our mother Earth.

Half way around that planet the visitors came to a desert, in the middle of which were two mighty interstellar ships such as the scouting expedition which had left the Earth for Sirius long before. That explained everything to the commanders of the ships from Earth. That was the reason for the Satellite's preparedness. The interstellar ships, all except one which was ordered to cruise about and keep watch for any suspicious signs, dropped to the surface near the two ships to learn whose fate they had come all the way from the solar system.



A door was slid half open in the side of the interstellar ship and . . . a man appeared in the opening. Seeing the ships of air drawing near, he made motions with his hands for them to keep away. They seemed to pay no attention to his signs, and continued to draw near. From the shore, thousands of men and women were putting off toward the ship in every kind of available craft.

The inhabitants of the strange world guessed rightly that the ten interstellar ships had not come just for the pleasure of it. That world was so well prepared for defense that they must have been expecting them. Had they been watching the approach of the interstellar ships as they came within the glare of their sun? Hardly. The ships traveled so swiftly that it was almost impossible to see them. Then again they could not possibly have prepared themselves so well in so short a space of time.

The region seemed utterly deserted. There was no sign of man. Nothing moved near the two ships. It did not look as if any of the creatures of the new found world had ever neared it. One, broken and twisted as if it had been dealt a terrific blow, was lying on its side, the other rested right side up as if it had come down with some one still at the controls.

In the form of a ring the eight ships slowly settled around the two wrecks. At the least sign of anything suspicious they were ready to shoot up into the heavens, rapidly regaining speed. The atmosphere was

tested and found fit to breathe. From each of the eight ships a number of the crew and inmates armed to the teeth, came forth to investigate the two interstellar ships that had many years ago carried the scouting expedition to Sirius. They approached warily. Suddenly the wide doors on the ship, which was lying right side up, opened and fan-shaped streams of all-devouring flame swept over the men, destroying them all before they could even threw themselves flat upon their faces.

The men aboard the interstellar ships who were on guard gave warning and the eight ships began to rise. In an instant the whole region became alive. Square masses of masonry rose jerkily from below the surface. They covered the whole region for miles near the two stranded interstellar ships, and from the rising masses of masonry the mouths of guns could be seen, bombarding the eight interstellar ships, destroying them one by one before they could rise more than their own length. The interstellar ship which was cruising about high in the heavens took alarm and started to speed away. A great gun stuck its mouth up from below the surface and poured a silent stream of projectiles toward the speeding ship. A few of the missiles penetrated into the chambers where the crew were. They were hollow, containing a vapor-like substance under pressure which was rushing forth steadily from a number of minute holes. Men grabbed the missiles and threw them into tanks containing water. The ship was out of range before any great damage was done.

A year after the ship left the ringed world which circled Sirius, a terrible disease broke out among the operating crew. The disease-germs were traced to the projectiles which had been fired into the ship as it sped away from the attack. All on board were infected, and they began to succumb one by one. The reserve crew were at last awakened from their state of suspended animation and took over the duties of the ship. They, too, contracted the disease. At last the ship reached the Earth.

Years passed. The Second Great Expedition, also a terrible punitive expedition, now had a goal in view. Preparations of the expedition down to the most minute detail were completed. The creatures who lived on the satellite which circled about Sirius would be sorry they ever attacked man.

Had those intelligent creatures who inhabited the ringed world of Sirius not attacked and destroyed the two expeditions from Earth, man, on discovering that it was in sole possession of highly intelligent creatures, would not have dreamt of invading it, but now . . .

THE beginning of the following year the expedition would start. A few more months and the day would dawn. The men and women who were to go were given a final round of training and then sent home to spend the remaining days with their families. The months dwindled down to one month, the one month to a week, the week to one day more—tomorrow.

It was impossible for sleep to come to any one on this particular night, for the night was being kept vibrantly awake by the incessant hum of countless voices, like that of angry bees, that rose and fell upon the chill night air. It came from the great dwellings, light streaming from each window, that towered up and up into the night until they seemed to merge as one with the star-flecked sky overhead, huge piles of steel and masonry that housed on the average of five thousand families to the building. It came from the many different street levels and wide recreation squares that were swiftly becoming crowded with people, mostly young. It came from the very air overhead through which youth was flashing on the wing. It was everywhere, a throbbing murmur of mingled weeping and laughter in which laughter was slowly becoming more and more pronounced.

On this night, as on that other memorial night, many millions of families were experiencing the sharp pangs of parting with their loved ones who were leaving upon a great adventure. They would most likely not return. For those who were going, as always, the thrill; for those who were to remain, the heartache. In nearly each and every apartment of those who were going, there were real tears and forced laughter and wishes of good luck. Some mothers tried bravely to hide their real feelings, but their laughter, plainly forced, jarred on their nerves; others wept bitterly and yet clung harder to those who were leaving.

All over the Earth it was the same, east or west, south or north, the members of the Second Great Expedition were taking their last leave of their parents, of their brother and sisters and friends who were either too old or too young or physically unfit to accompany them on this stupendous adventure, which was being launched into that boundless void of space out beyond the bounds of the solar system. Keepsakes, locks of hair, and every imaginable remedy for pains and wounds were being thrust upon them from all sides and steadfastly refused as they personally packed their slender kits. Only pictures of those whom they would probably never see again in flesh were being reverently placed away.

All this activity was like that of a busy hive of overcrowded bees preparing to swarm.

The order had gone forth that every one must be ready at his appointed place an hour after dawn. Since they were old enough to walk they were drilled and now they were ready. That order only applied to the rank and file of the expedition. The officers, trained thoroughly in the recently resurrected art of warfare, had gathered from the four corners of the earth months before for the last practice trips out into space in the interstellar ships. They were now gathered together for their final instructions. A high standard, physically and mentally, was demanded of the officers. In their hands would rest the fate of the expedition.

The officers had also to go through the ceremony of swearing allegiance *en masse* to the quota leaders of each zone—a most impressive ceremony, that would mark the official end, as far as the authorities of Earth were concerned, to all further responsibilities of the Second Great Expedition. From that moment on, it would be entirely in the hands of the six military leaders and their six hundred thousand officers. That expedition was not, like the first, one of peace settlement on far-off worlds beyond the bounds of the solar system; this was an expedition of conquest.

At the hundred and twenty-first century of the New Era the world was divided into three zones of almost equal land surface and inhabited by the three great divisions of man; the White, the Yellow, and the Black. Each zone was inhabited by the race which could best stand the climate. The zones were named after the color of the inhabitants. The Black Zone was situated at the equator, a wide swath of land above and below the limits of the Black Zone was known as the Yellow Zone, while the White Zone extended to the Arctic and Antarctic Circles. The regions from the limits of the territory alloted to the white races on the north and south to the poles belonged equally to the three divisions of mankind. The world's greatest mines were situated up there. Man looked upon the north and south as his two great storehouses of raw materials. Most of the raw materials needed and

used by him came from the land of the midnight sun. The polar regions were also two immense underground factories, which supplied the world with all of its larger manufactured articles of metal and glass.

From each of the zones had been drawn an equal quota of boys and girls—now men and women—of high physical and mental standard. In the years that followed they were assigned to vocations for which the tests showed they were best fitted and they were trained thoroughly in the various trades, professions, and sciences. Besides their vocations, the rank and file of the expedition were trained, as a secondary consideration, in the art of warfare; but the officers had studied, primarily, the art of maneuvering the mighty interstellar ships, which were to carry the forces of the expedition and to handle their terrible weapons of destruction, to lead their forces on landing and by their example of utter disregard for life spur them on in their conquest of that ringed satellite revolving around bright Sirius.

Six were selected from among the officers to lead the expedition, three of each sex, one for each quota. The six leaders-to-be were selected for their mental qualities to command and lead their quotas as other youths of the expedition were selected and trained in the occupations for which they were best fitted.

A few more brief hours and the day for which man has waited for many years will have dawned. The night was still young. It was being whispered with a knowing smile that man would have a wild celebration tonight, and for many nights to come. Every one would participate, the old and the young; those who were to stay as well as the youths who were to go.

Was there any wonder, then, that those who were to go should try to tear themselves away as quickly as they could? For they, with the utter thoughtlessness of youth, wanted to be out and enjoy the mad revelry of this night which many were hinting about. Didn't they deserve it? They had trained and trained for years; little enjoyment had they gotten out of life, and this was to be their last night of freedom on Earth. Besides, they wanted to get over the painful scenes of parting as quickly as possible and be out with their comrades. Those who were to be left behind held on to them more tightly as the clocks ticked the speeding minutes away.

The different levels of the wide avenues and narrower side streets were already thronged with crowds of laughing-eyed boys and girls—members of the expedition in their centers—, while sober-eyed men and women stood watching from the windows. The ages of those who were to go ranged from twenty to twenty-four. Only those so young could go; for the journey would take more than thirteen long years, time enough for them to mature. But they did not seem to worry, they were happy, extremely hilarious.

Their overbubbling laughter was but youth's natural rebound of spirits from their heart-wrenching partings at home. They never expected to see any member of their respective families again, unless they caught sight of them as they marched past them on the great review tomorrow, because from that display they would march directly to the various underground railway depots that would take them to the far north and to the far south where their interstellar ships were in readiness—long, slender vehicles that were fully provisioned to take them on their terrific voyage to the neighborhood of Sirius and the ringed world that revolved around it.

Arm in arm, ten and more abreast, with one or two members of the expedition in the middle, they swung up and down the different levels, talking, laughing, singing—excitedly happy. Those who wore the white, yellow, and black uniforms were scheduled to start at midnight tomorrow. Youth made sport of everything, even of death. They cared nothing for the tears and dark forebodings of some of their pessimistic elders.

Youth at no time ever gave heed to the uncertainties of tomorrow. Was not the triumphant example of the First Great Expedition ever before their eyes? Who could forget their glory? And the worlds that they had gained for man out there urged them on. What did they care if the world which was the goal of the Second Great Expedition was already inhabited by intelligent creatures who possessed weapons capable of destroying their mighty interstellar ships? It would be a different story this time. The expedition was no mere scouting expedition. They were equipped for war.

Besides being the last night under the open star-sprinkled sky from the surface of Earth for the members of the expedition, it was the last day of the old year, tomorrow, the first of the new. The new year had always been celebrated. Before the new year had aged but one day they, the rank and file of the expedition, would all have entered their ships and be dead, as far as the inhabitants of Earth were concerned.

It was growing late, nearing midnight. The great day was approaching. Expectant eyes were turned impatiently up to the huge illuminated dials on the various buildings, and they watched the minute hands as they slowly crept toward twelve. Just a few minutes more and the new day and the new year would come into existence.

The people were pouring out of the great residential buildings in their thousands, more and more each passing instant as it approached closer to the hour of midnight. The doorways were jammed. It seemed as if they couldn't come out of the buildings fast enough at the different street levels, so they began dropping down on wings, like fluttering leaves on a windy day in autumn. It was the same in every city and town of any size. The different street levels and recreation squares were becoming packed to the point of suffocation. The inhabitants of the huge piles of steel and masonry seemed to have only one desire—to get out into the open.

Suddenly the strident whine of the attention-arresters connected in series with the loud-speakers signalled the people for silence. A hush fell upon the restless throngs on all levels. The speaker, whoever he was, must be important, else the message must be of vital interest, or the radio loud-speakers on the municipal building would not signal the people for silence.

In every city and town in the world a voice began to vibrate from the loud speakers near the top of the public buildings. The voice was recognized immediately. It belonged to Thadeus, President of the Three Zones. His kindly voice was addressing them, inspiring them as always.

"It is primarily to you, the young people of Earth who are going to extend the glories of man in other worlds, that I wish to speak. You will never hear my voice again. I have put off this address to the last moment. I have no excuse to offer. I wish that I could go with you, but I am old and the blood runs sluggishly through my veins. Only youth with all its reserve of vital forces can survive the journey.

"It has come to my ears that many of you are planning excesses tonight which you will only regret later. You wish to throw all restraint aside. But don't. Tonight is to be dedicated to nobler thoughts. To inspire you on to great deeds, I have ordered the same instruments to play that wonderful melody tonight, that

was played for the First Great Expedition a thousand years ago.

"But I have something to say to you first. You are on the eve of your ——"

Before he had well begun that last sentence the hour of midnight came on the eastern seaboard of America. There was a sudden hush before the chimes began to toll the dying year into eternity. The silence for an instant was tomb-like. Then a bell broke the stillness, another caught it up, another and then another. Bell after bell began to add its share to the clangor. Every means that could produce sound was brought into play. The discordant, jarring din that they made was appalling. And then, when the noise was at its height, not till then, the youths that packed the different levels gave voice to their joy. Wildly they cried their hurrahs. Their shouting for a moment even drowned the bells and other shrill noise producers.

Then, as if to welcome the newborn year, beams of intensely brilliant light flashed upon the heavens. They were of every conceivable shade and color, and came from thousands upon thousands of huge searchlights, each a billion candle-powered or more,—their rays sweeping back and forth upon the dark midnight sky.

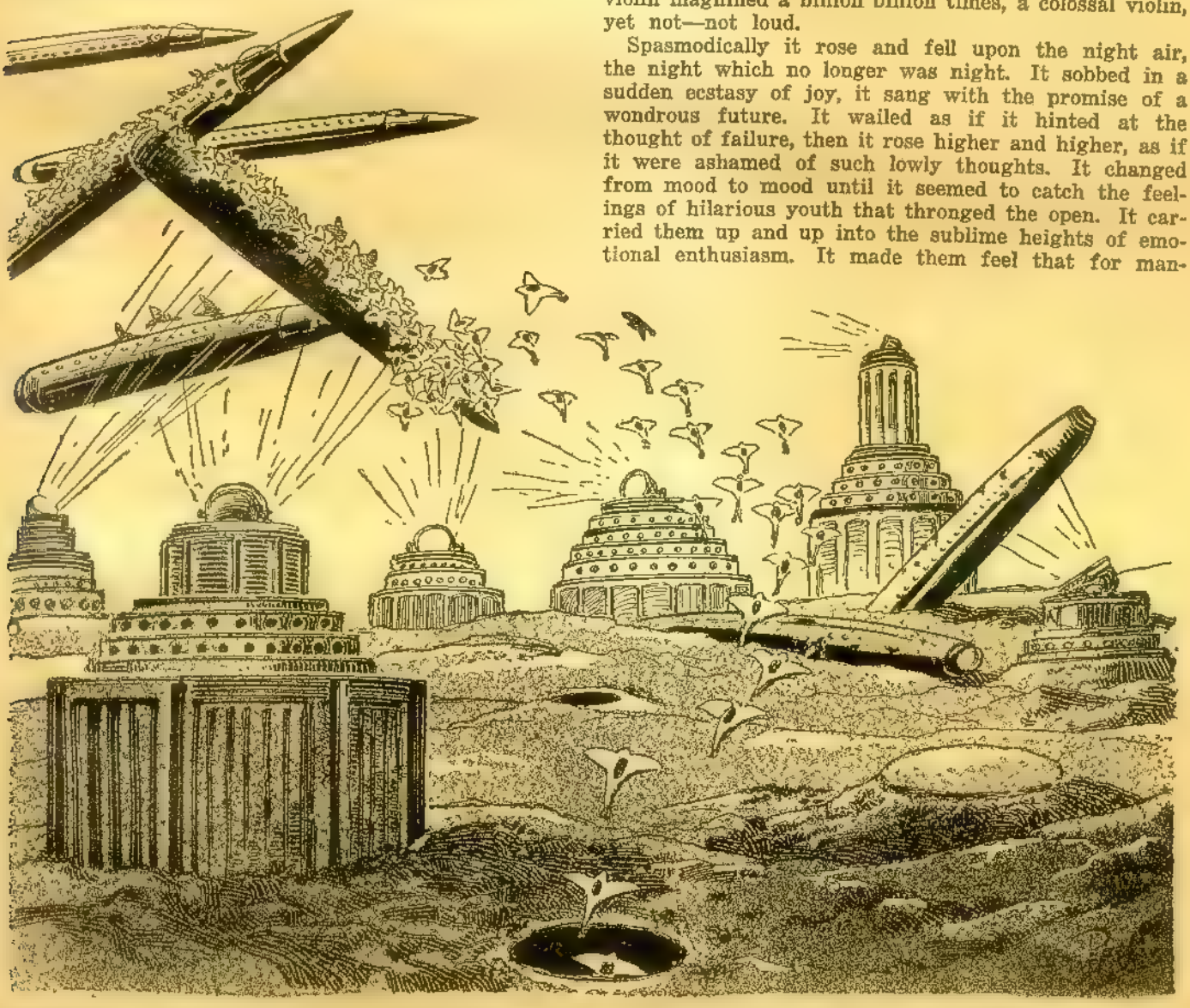
They blended, melting into each other, living colors that changed and changed and changed. The beams began to sweep in circles, ever widening and narrowing, interweaving one into the other. The heavens from horizon to horizon were criss-crossed with them. Then, all as one, the beams went off, then on, then off. The combined light of all the myriads of high powered searchlights, still interweaving into each other, started to pulsate off and on, faster and faster.

The swift pulsations of light had an exhilarating effect upon those who watched. The blood in their veins began to circulate faster, their breath began to quicken. Other colors, unimaginable in their splendor, came out and swept the heavens as waves move across a sea. By their light the night was being turned into a man-made day.

The discordant clangor of the bells seemed to pause in indecision, died down to a mere whisper and then were stilled. But the beams of colored light still pulsated and swept across the midnight sky.

But what was that which was coming? Oh so slowly! From far off it crept nearer and nearer. What was it? The senses strained. Then it was recognized by the ear as vibrations—sound. It came closer, became louder. It echoed dully from point to point. Of a sudden it was everywhere, sweeping down upon the Earth, bursting forth like the staccato of a mighty drum—as if the taut sky of the Earth itself were being used for a drum! It beat time. Then, accompanying it, there wailed forth the liquid notes of a violin, a violin magnified a billion billion times, a colossal violin, yet not—not loud.

Spasmodically it rose and fell upon the night air, the night which no longer was night. It sobbed in a sudden ecstasy of joy, it sang with the promise of a wondrous future. It wailed as if it hinted at the thought of failure, then it rose higher and higher, as if it were ashamed of such lowly thoughts. It changed from mood to mood until it seemed to catch the feelings of hilarious youth that thronged the open. It carried them up and up into the sublime heights of emotional enthusiasm. It made them feel that for man-



Masses of masonry rose jerkily from below the surface. They covered the whole region for miles near the two stranded interstellar ships, and from the rising masses of masonry, the mouths of guns could be seen, bombarding the eight interstellar ships, destroying them one by one before they could rise more than their own length.

kind they would go through the torments of the damned. Then it took on the stately tones of an anthem. But ofttimes it sobbed until the soul seemed to sob in tune with it.

Melody, the like of which had been played a thousand years ago to send off the First Great Expedition on its successful venture, played on through the night, while the intensely brilliant beams of colored light kept perfect time. The mind can hardly comprehend the volume of it, or its wonderful, all-pervading inspiration. It told of man climbing up and up, never resting. The throbbing of the drum and the sobbing of the violin tore the heartstrings apart with the wonderful melody and with the story it tried to tell.

Hours passed. It seemed as if that melody would continue through all eternity, like the so-called music of the spheres.

The first day of the year 12,001 of the New Era dawned. On the following day the Second Great Expedition was scheduled to be launched into the boundless infinity of space toward Sirius. The First Great Expedition had gone toward Alpha Centauri and met with no opposition. They had peacefully taken possession of the two worlds which their scouts had selected as the only two fit for human habitation. Their ships were not filled with weapons for destruction, but with tools for construction. To each who had braved the terrors of the unknown there had been allotted a thousand acres of the choicest land upon the surface of those worlds.

It would be different, though, for those who comprised the Second Great Expedition. This would be no peaceful settlement. The ringed world, the only planet around Sirius, was inhabited by intelligent creatures. The inhabitants of that world had proved themselves well prepared to defend their world against invaders. Thousands of men had already lost their lives upon that world, before one hostile move had been made.

It became a matter of self-preservation. Upon the surface of that ringed world there were a number of interstellar ships which the creatures had managed to bring down. Some were instantly destroyed, others were not. To creatures as intelligent as they undoubtedly were the machinery within the interior of those intersteller ships was not too intricate, nor the driving mechanism too hard to understand. To the race of man there were three reasons why their extinction was a vital necessity; they were too well prepared for war, too near the solar system, too near level of man.

On the wide first balcony of the recently erected Academy of War, Thadeus, President of the Three Zones, a spare, stately figure of a man grown old slowly, stood watching the almost endless line of officers of the expedition, one hundred abreast, as they drew near the wide portals for the farewell address and the ceremony of swearing allegiance *en masse* to the six selected leaders. Proudly they carried themselves. They moved as one. President Thadeus's kindly yet determined face lit up with pride—just pride, for had he not devoted the major portion of his life to the preparation of the expedition? When Death had called his predecessor, ably had he grasped the reins that the cold hands had let go and brought the preparations of the Second Great Expedition to a successful termination. He had done yet more, he had personally taken charge of the training of the officers. Though his duties were manifold, he never missed an opportunity to watch them and note their improvements.

The recently erected Academy of War—which had been built primarily to teach the science of warfare to the officers of the Second Great Expedition, stood in an isolated spot far in front of the three governmental cities which represented the three zones of Earth. The three governmental cities were really one, divided into three triangles and separated from each other by mile-wide paved boulevards. The two paved boulevards came together in front of the Academy.

Down one of the boulevards officers and men, were marching. They were the officers of the Black Quota and would be the first to enter. At the head of the officers of the Black Zone strode their young commander. He was distinguished from the rest of his officers by a flaming-red silken crepe over his jet black uniform which was long enough to reach from shoulder to heels and which fluttered out behind him as he moved proudly forward.

The balcony upon which President Thadeus stood was five hundred feet above the paved surface below. The Academy of War was the tallest building on Earth. Its topmost pinnacle towered thirty-eight hundred and some seventy odd feet above the surrounding country.

Upon the balcony, on either side of the president, stood Zenofia, Commander of the Black Female Quota, and Ureena, Commander of the Yellow Female Quota; each was watching the marching officers through a pair of powerful binoculars. The two leaders had over their uniforms their flaming-red capes, the insignia of their rank.

Zenofia towered over the other two on the balcony. She stood five feet, eleven inches in height and one had but to glance into her eyes to see why she had been selected to lead her quota. She possessed intelligence, determination which could surmount all obstacles, and the power to have her slightest command obeyed without question. Ureena, in contrast, was barely five feet in height and built daintily. There was little they had in common except the power to lead. Where the other would climb Ureena would go around. Strategy, not determination, was her forte.

Matilda, Commander of the White Female Quota, possessed the qualities of both besides a dash of reckless daring. She was hovering near the balcony on a pair of individual flying wings which were strapped firmly upon her shoulders with a metal brace and wide straps. The flying wings were thin, reinforced metal plates that could open and close like the feathers in the wings of a bird. Each wing measured a fraction over thirty-six inches, and was made of an aluminum alloy that was much stronger than the finest steel. What the wings lacked in size they made up in power, for the wings were operated by a powerful atomic motor that weighed only five pounds, yet could develop twenty horsepower with ease. The atomic motor could vibrate the wings as fast as the wings of an insect vibrate. Over her head and fastened to her shoulders she wore a conical helmet of transparent substance that lessened the air-resistance and let her breathe evenly.

The Blacks had nearly all entered the great Academy and the Yellows with their yellow uniforms were just coming into view down the second boulevard. At their head strode Keelen, Commander of the Yellow Male Quota. Ureena, Commander of the Yellow Female Quota, leaned over the balustrade to watch him through her glasses a little better. They were betrothed.

Commander Keelen at the head of his officers was approaching swiftly. No one could mistake him with his cape of flaming-red silk that fluttered behind him, his badge of leadership. Impulsively, Ureena called to him, though she did not expect him to hear. The tramp of thousands of metal-shod feet in perfect

unison would have drowned out her voice had it been a hundred times as loud. Thadeus, who was standing between the two girl leaders, glanced down at her and smiled. Well did he know of their attachment for each other. It was one of the few things at which he wondered greatly. Her—their feeling for each other was a throwback to when love, not eugenics, ruled mating.

Through her glasses Ureena saw Keelen's head go back and his eyes begin to travel up the wall of the Academy of War to the first balcony upon which she stood. She waved her arms wildly to attract his attention. She leaned over the balustrade a little too far and lost her balance. With a startled shriek she slipped over the top of the balustrade.

At her shrill cry President Thadeus turned his head and saw her falling. His hands darted out and caught the red silken cape as it fluttered over. But the cape was very thin and began to rip almost before it felt the full strain at the other end. Zenofia, the black leader, was more than a half dozen paces from Thadeus. At the cry she too turned her head. She grasped the situation instantly and began to run toward the falling girl. There was a slight chance that she might reach there in time to put her hand through the openings in the balustrade and catch hold of Ureena's clothing before she fell.

Matilda, the white leader, who was hovering near on wing, heard the cry and realized that she must act at once if the other was to be saved. The cape was parting swiftly. Zenofia was still four paces off.

If Ureena was not saved, the rank and file of the expedition—the masses even at this late date were still in a measure superstitious—would consider it a dreadful omen. It would take the heart out of many. She had the power to help if she could reach her in time. So almost as quick as a flash she plunged to the aid of the little yellow leader. But even before she sped her own length she saw that the cape must break before she could possibly reach her. It seemed as if the few whole threads in the cape were snapping.

The air seemed to quiver with chilled suspense. The tramp of the thousands of metal-shod feet below sounded as if they came from a distance immeasurably far off, from a different world.

Matilda saw the face of Thadeus turn deathly pale as he gazed at her and saw how far off she was. He heard the thud of flying feet behind him and glanced back out of the corner of his eye. Zenofia was still three paces off. Glistening beads of sweat came out all over his wrinkled face. The wings upon her back were beating the air heavily to gain the momentum. She saw his lips frame the words:

"Faster! Faster!"

But still she was far off. Every fraction of an instant she was gaining speed. Would she be in time?

The cape parted! With an awful despairing cry Ureena plunged downward. Half of her flaming-red cape fluttered behind her. Like a meteor she fell.

Matilda reached the spot a second too late. With the speed of a shot she hurtled after her. The hum of the metal wings on her back grew shrill with their speed and their power.

Those on the ground level five hundred feet below felt the impending danger of the body that was hurtling down toward them. They looked up. Those directly under the balcony took in the full significance of the tragedy and started to draw back hastily. Those from a distance saw the white leader hurtle after the other in a desperate effort to save. It seemed futile to them. Yet their breaths were tightly drawn in as they saw her increase her downward speed still more.

Commander Keelen, who was glancing at the huge sculptured figure of Mars, the ancient god of war, just above the main entrance to the Academy, not up at the balcony as Ureena had imagined, also glanced up. Into the field of his vision flashed the bright yellow uniform and the fluttering half of the flaming-red cape. Only one on Earth had the right to that combination on this day. He started to run to the spot directly under, as if he could break the force of her fall with his own body. He did not seem to realize that he could never reach the spot in time, and if he did the force of her fall from that height would crush them both to pulp.

Faster and yet faster did Matilda drop in pursuit, the wings on her back whining terribly as they forced her down with the speed of a bullet. Her hands were outstretched. Her body was as straight as an arrow and rigid. Only her fingers moved, opening and closing spasmodically upon the empty air. Would she never reach Ureena?

At last the tips of her fingers touched the fluttering half of Ureena's cape, then it fluttered about her wrists, now her hands gripped cloth and held. It was not the thin silken half of the cape, but the sturdy yellow uniform underneath.

The wings, their action slowly reversed, braked their downward rush and after a moment of poising began to draw them both up.

Just a moment or so and it was over.

From below there rose a roar as the seeming impossibility was accomplished. A moment later the name of the lady who was snatched from death ran like wildfire through the ranks of those below. Pandemonium followed. Those below were mainly the officers of the Yellow Quota.

The look of gratitude that old Thadeus gave her as she hovered over the balcony with her burden more than repaid her for what she had done. President Thadeus had always been like a fond father to the three female leaders.

His eager hands reached trembling for Ureena and laid her gently upon the marble floor of the balcony. She did not move. He bent his head to her breast and detected the fluttering beat of her heart. He began stroking her hands.

She uttered a long drawn-out sigh. Her eyelids quivered for a moment and then opened wide. Wildly she gazed about. Surprise was in her eyes as she realized where she was and saw the familiar faces of those she knew, bent over her. It was plain to see that she did not expect to find herself in the land of the living again.

Physically she was none the worse for her narrow escape. The scare that she received, however, would probably make her afraid to venture upon high places again.

She made an effort to speak, gulped, and then asked incredulously:

"Was it only a dream that I felt myself slipping over the balustrade and falling to certain death on the stones below? Did I not really fall?"

"Yes, child," Thadeus answered softly, "you did fall, but you were saved by your white sister who was hovering near on wing. You are not hurt, my child, are you?" he ended anxiously.

Ureena shook her head.

Her rescuer, who had perched herself on the top of the balustrade, waited to hear no more. She stood up, turned her back on those on the balcony and started her wings a-vibrating. The wings drew her up, up until she was at the three thousand-foot level and then she sped like an arrow toward the barracks

where her thousands of girl captains were gathered, waiting for her to come and lead them.

She reached her own private quarters and changed her flying outfit for a snow-white uniform and cape of flaming-red. Swiftly she opened the door leading out of her quarters and raced for the lifts that were to carry her down to the fourth street level. She sped across the moving sidewalks until she was on the one that traveled a mile-a-minute and took a seat. Five minutes later she was at the head of the female officers of the White Quota.

At the door which let out to the first balcony of the Academy of War there came a scraping of metal-shod feet on the marble threshold. The door was given a heavy thud, it swayed outward but did not open. It sounded as though someone had staggered against it. The noise attracted the attention of those on the balcony.

On the face of President Thadeus there appeared a red flush of anger. What clumsy fool was out there who could not see where he was going?

The door was given another thud and swung open. A man appeared upon the threshold. He rocked back and forth upon his feet. He was panting painfully, like a man who, disregarding or forgetting the fast pneumatic lifts, had climbed the rarely used spiral stairway on a run from the first street level.

"What do you want?" one of the physicians demanded.

The man did not reply. His face was of a sickly yellow-greyish color and streaked with sweat. His eyes were wild. Hardly able to stand, he staggered to where Ureena lay.

Ureena held out her hands to him. Startled, Thadeus recognized the man. It was Keelen, the co-leader of the Yellow forces. His yellow uniform was covered with dust from running up the spiral stairway, his red silken cape was slashed to ribbons by the heels of his metal-shod feet as he leapt up the stairs three and more at a time.

Keelen saw that her eyes were open and that she appeared to be unharmed. With a glad cry of relief he threw himself down upon his knees beside her.

He could not speak.

She reached up and stroked his face tenderly. She understood. Words between them were unnecessary.

"Where is she?" Ureena suddenly demanded, quickly looking around.

"Who?" Keelen asked tenderly.

"Matilda. I have not thanked her yet."

Keelen shook his head.

Thadeus volunteered the information that she had left to rejoin her officers. It was growing late and, according to the schedule, the White Quota of the Second Great Expedition, both male and female, had to be on their way north and south to the polar regions within the next three hours.

"How can I repay her?" Ureena broke in. "It is not for myself that I value my life so, but for you."

"Keelen," Thadeus said slowly, "it is time for you to take your place at the head of your officers in the auditorium below. Remember the schedule. Nothing must interfere now. Everything must move as smoothly as clockwork. The White Female Quota of officers led by their leader is even now on its way here. You can see them through the openings in the balustrade. Each of you must speed to your place. If Ureena cannot go I will appoint a proxy to lead them and she can take her place in the auditorium."

"I will go at once, father," Ureena spoke up. "I am still a bit dizzy, but it will soon pass."

"Very well, child," he replied. "But you must hurry.

Faster and faster did Matilda drop in pursuit, the wings on her back whining terribly as they forced her down with the speed of a bullet. Her hands were outstretched. Her body was as straight as an arrow and rigid. Only her fingers moved, opening and closing spasmodically upon the empty air. Would she never reach Ureena?

Each of you must take your place at the proper instant. There must be no waiting. After the ceremony of allegiance you must go your separate ways, each to lead your legions. Now go, hurry!"

"A moment more, sire," Commander Keelen pleaded.

"A moment, no more," Thadeus granted.

He turned and beckoned to the others and strode into the interior of the Academy. They moved swiftly toward the lifts, Commander Zenofia and the physicians going down to the moving platforms below the ground level, while President Thadeus went up to his suite to don his raiment for the ceremony at which he would officiate.

An hour later President Thadeus stepped into one of the fast pneumatic lifts at the two thousand foot level upon which his suite was situated and dropped swiftly down. At the thousand foot level he stopped and looked out through the transparent sides of the cage. His eyes slowly took in the details of the vast auditorium of the Academy of War. He could see from the thousand foot height that half of the immense auditorium which was reserved for the male officers of the Second Great Expedition was already packed, every one of the three hundred thousand seats was occupied, while the other half which was reserved for the female officers was rapidly filling up. Then his eyes traveled up, up to the thirty-second balcony and took in the thousands of the leading men and women of Earth from all three zones who were sitting there patiently.

Again he touched the button and the lift sank to the two hundred and fifty foot level on which stood the speaker's box just above the middle stage of the three great stages underneath. As he made his way from the lift along a glass-enclosed gallery to the same box he was pleased to see Commander Keelen, with a new cape of flaming-red silk, on his raised seat facing the Yellow officers. The two other commanders were also there on their raised seats. The white, yellow, and black uniforms set each quota off distinctly.

Next he turned his eyes toward the other side and saw that Commander Matilda was already seated in front of her officers. Commander Zenofia of the Black legions was also there with her officers. The female officers of the Yellow Quota, who should have followed the White forces into the Academy, were just entering one hundred abreast, and at their head proudly moved Commander Ureena.

As soon as they were all seated, President Thadeus gave the signal. Slowly the solemn ceremony of swearing Allegiance to the six leaders was gotten under way. Then after he finished reading his farewell address, added:

"For well over two hundred years the people of Earth have labored unceasingly for this day. They have toiled, made virtual slaves of themselves, worked themselves into early graves so that you who are going may lack nothing. Long, long ago man adopted as his own one of the primary laws of the social order of insects and followed unswervingly their example of placing the race high above themselves, their work, their own petty ambitions. To you who are going will be the glory, to them, the toil. Perhaps as they labored at their tasks they dreamed that it was they themselves who were going.

"Even after you have left the surface of Earth we will continue to aid you. We who remain will force our will power to accompany you and help you succeed as the inhabitants of Earth a thousand years ago willed the success of the First Great Expedition which they launched. Perhaps it was the strengthening power of that will added to their own determination which held them to their course until success crowned their efforts. True, they had nothing to contend with as you will have, and the only risks they ran were the ordinary risks which attend the crossing of interstellar spaces. Yet without that accompanying will and resolution they might have lost heart before they were halfway toward their destination when they blundered into the head of a dark comet. They lost a number of ships. Had they been on the lookout that accident would not have befallen them. The ships of the present expedition are all equipped with a device which will warn you of anything in your path. Still, they were pioneers, and to them belongs the glory.

"Peacefully they took possession of two worlds that revolve around Alpha Centauri. On not one of those two worlds was there animal life of any description, nothing but a sort of low plant life which resembled moss and was of a deep blush color. The various domestic animals that they had taken along with them became acclimatized very easily on those planets and probably never knew that they had been transported to alien worlds, while the seeds of various kinds of plant life which man had found useful thrived wonderfully when insect life was introduced from Earth to fertilize them, better even than on their own native world which they had left behind forever.

"Sirius is really a double star, or, as it is better known to the astronomers, a binary. Its companion is of insignificant size, but of intense density. Its distance from Sirius is a little more than the distance which separates the planet Uranus from our sun. Sirius, as you know, is larger and hotter than our yellow dwarf sun.

"We on Earth have an idea of the kind of life that exists on the ringed world that revolves around Sirius and its heavy dwarf companion. Its inhabitants have some kind of globular central body with numerous limb-like appendages, and have a high degree of intelligence. They menace the security of our existence. The few of our spies who returned were fast in the grip of a terrible disease which our physicians later conquered; they had been able to see some of the works of the strange beings, huge masses of masonry comparable to our greatest buildings. Whatever kind of life exists there, remember, commanders and captains of the Second Great Expedition, that man is SUPREME! Mankind, to the race of men, is all-important!

"When this memorial day ends you will start. When you leave Earth behind, the powerful will of all mankind will follow you, will always be behind you, will aid you. May victory always crown your efforts out there on that planet which has its orbit around Sirius. One thing I shall try to impress upon your minds and you must impress it upon the minds of those that come after you: Do not forget to be true to Earth and its inhabitants. If you ever need our aid, call, and we will come; if we call upon you, do not be slow in coming."

With that he turned slowly upon his heel and made his way along the glass covered gallery to where he could get the lift that would take him up to his suite on the two thousand foot level. He did not wait to see the quota of the White Zone stand up and begin to file out, the women following the men.

The army of captains from the White Zone, male and female, each going their own way, marched briskly to the various underground railway depots near the three governmental cities that were to take them to the polar regions, the men to the north, the women to the south. The rank and file of the Second Great Expedition had embarked from thousands of cities and

towns and the first were already at their destination undergoing certain preparations which did not apply to the officers.

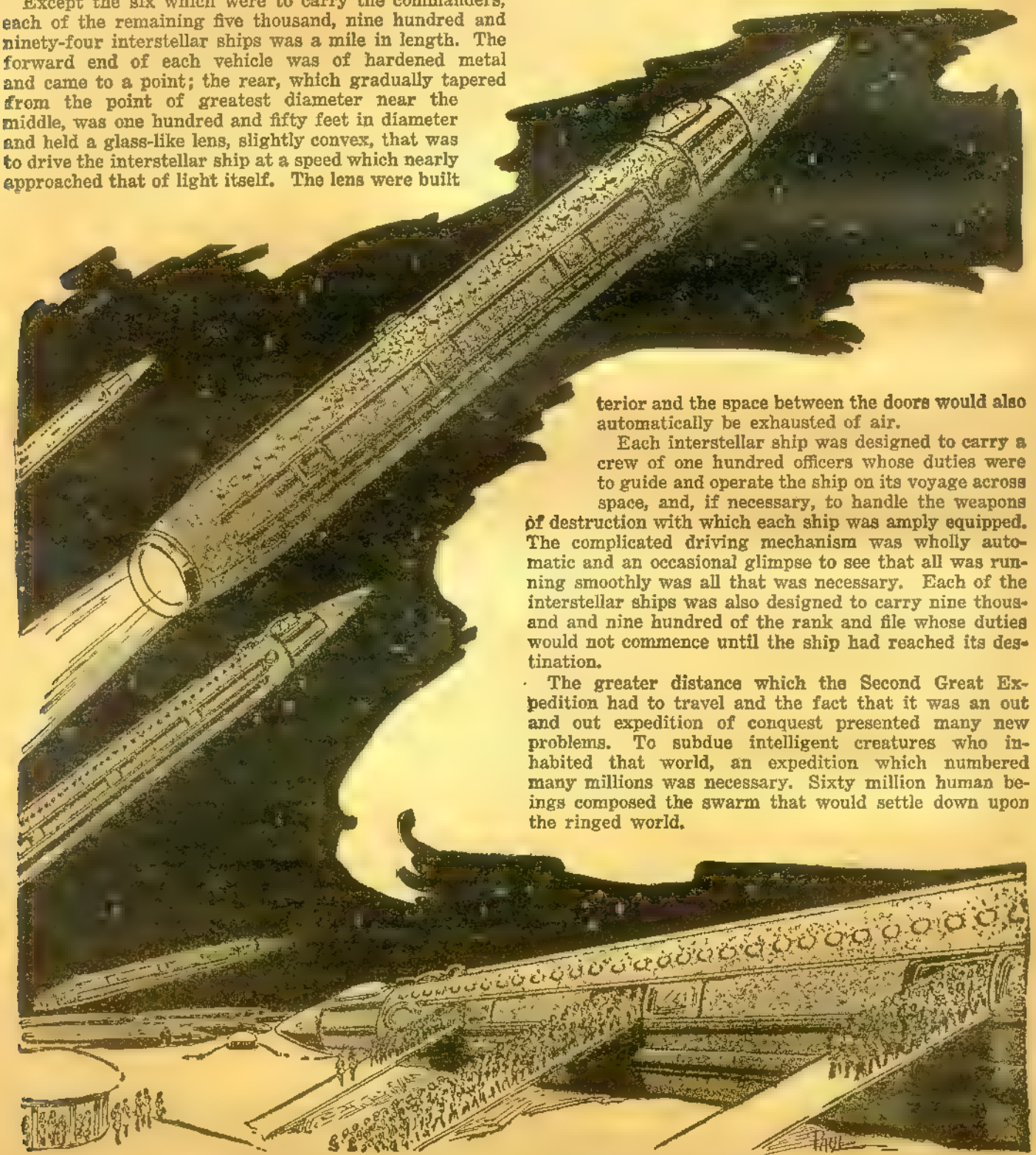
The whole earth just below the surface was criss-crossed with tunnels. At a speed which was truly terrific the underground trains traveled through express tunnels all the way to the polar regions. The factories within the Arctic and Antarctic Circles were all far underground. There was not a building upon the surface. Six thousand mighty interstellar ships which were going to take the Second Great Expedition on its long journey also dotted the surface of those icy regions of north and south.

Except the six which were to carry the commanders, each of the remaining five thousand, nine hundred and ninety-four interstellar ships was a mile in length. The forward end of each vehicle was of hardened metal and came to a point; the rear, which gradually tapered from the point of greatest diameter near the middle, was one hundred and fifty feet in diameter and held a glass-like lens, slightly convex, that was to drive the interstellar ship at a speed which nearly approached that of light itself. The lens were built up of separate sections and somewhat resembled the compound eye of an insect.

The vehicles were all constructed of a special alloy which could withstand the extremes of temperature with the least expansion and contraction. The alloy could not, under the most adverse conditions, rust or corrode. All the vehicles had three separate walls. The space between the walls was exhausted of air and so formed a two-fold vacuum that would insulate the interior from the cold of the void between the stars. Once the men were within, three massive air-tight doors closed each of the eight entrances into the ship's interior and the space between the doors would also automatically be exhausted of air.

Each interstellar ship was designed to carry a crew of one hundred officers whose duties were to guide and operate the ship on its voyage across space, and, if necessary, to handle the weapons of destruction with which each ship was amply equipped. The complicated driving mechanism was wholly automatic and an occasional glimpse to see that all was running smoothly was all that was necessary. Each of the interstellar ships was also designed to carry nine thousand and nine hundred of the rank and file whose duties would not commence until the ship had reached its destination.

The greater distance which the Second Great Expedition had to travel and the fact that it was an out and out expedition of conquest presented many new problems. To subdue intelligent creatures who inhabited that world, an expedition which numbered many millions was necessary. Sixty million human beings composed the swarm that would settle down upon the ringed world.



Four minutes late, the first mighty interstellar ship slowly began to rear up until its sharp nose pointed up at an angle of forty-five degrees, then it rose heavenwards. Following fast behind it came ten more of the huge interstellar ships.

From many underground railway depots the men of the expedition had started marching up to the surface of the polar regions where the interstellar ships lay half buried in pits of packed snow and ice. Though the men were officerless, there was not the slightest confusion. As soon as they reached the surface, in an orderly fashion that plainly told of long days of training, they formed into ranks a score abreast and marched to the interstellar ships, each body of men to its assigned place. Every interstellar ship was numbered with gigantic numerals, and the guides to them were roads of snow packed to icy hardness.

Physicians, not belonging to the expedition, but having a vital duty to perform before its departure, had arrived during the preceding week from all parts of the world and had taken up temporary quarters aboard the ships. To each of the six thousand mighty ships had been assigned two hundred of the physicians. They had barely finished what preparations they had to make before the men began to arrive aboard each of the ships in a steady stream.

Everything moved with automatic smoothness. There was no hesitation, no needless delay. Each man knew what he had to do, each man did what was required of him.

On entering the ships, the men, five hundred or so at a time, were led into a huge chamber in the very heart of the ships and ordered to strip. Every member of the rank and file had on his otherwise physically perfect body ten or more pounds of excess fat. They were then ordered to pack their clothes in their kit bags and toss them in certain large bins.

As soon as the physicians examined them—the men were inoculated with an antitoxin against the disease germs that the men in the plague ship had brought back with them from the ringed world—they were exposed to certain rays and led through a series of tanks containing various solutions. They were then marched through cleansing showers, after which they dried themselves before screens throwing off radiant heat, and, as they moved along by the press of those behind, they were dusted with a fine powder of sweet, cloying fragrance which was strongly antiseptic. Naked as the day they were born they followed each other in a steady stream into a much larger chamber filled from floor to ceiling with deep coffin-like bunks, row after row until they seemed almost countless, and ordered to lie down in them. Each bunk contained a bedding of blankets spun from long asbestos fibre, also a lid of glass-like substance which would bend but would not break.

As they crawled into the bunks they cried their farewells to each other. They shifted around until they found a comfortable position and then grew still. Their thoughts claimed all of their attention.

Physicians passed along the rows of bunks and injected the drugs which caused instant suspension of animation. The effect of those drugs would not wear off until a certain antidote was injected. The men would need neither food nor oxygen. They could lie in the death-like state of suspended animation for many years without any ill effects except for the gradual diminution of their weight. The lids were then snapped down and fastened.

Before they had finished their task the officers began to arrive, and went about their duties at once, paying little attention to the physicians who were working on the last batch. The officers knew all about the preparations for the "long sleep" (suspended animation) and how to awaken the sleepers. Even if they had wanted to they could not watch. Time was precious.

The officers, on entering their proper stations, made sure that the levers controlling the motors and propelling rays were working smoothly, made themselves thoroughly familiar with their posts. There was no need for them to explore the ship which was to be their prison for the next thirteen and a half years, they were familiar with every detail. They held themselves in readiness, waiting for the signal.

The same thing was going on in the south where the women were also getting ready.

The physicians had just left, were hurrying to the underground depots as fast as they could. The time scheduled for the departure was near. To be out in the open when the ships started to leave would be certain death.

According to the schedule it lacked but a few minutes to the starting time. The doors were snapped shut. The act of closing the triple doors automatically started the pumps to empty the air between each set of three doors. It did not take long to form the necessary vacuum. When the ships that were to go first had done so, they signalled that they were ready.

It was four minutes after one A. M. of the second day of the year 12,001 of the New Era, four minutes late, that the first mighty interstellar ship slowly began to rear up until its sharp nose pointed up at an angle of forty-five degrees, then it rose heavenwards. It was propelled by the invisible rays of the fifty-fifth octave. It was the ship that carried the Leader of the White Male Quota. Following fast behind it came ten more of the huge interstellar ships. From the South, Commander Matilda's ship flashed up into the heavens toward bright Sirius.

In two streams, one from the north and one from the south, the interstellar ships started on their long journey into the utter void of that airless space between the sun and Sirius. Every minute twenty ships left the surface of Earth. It took nearly two hours before the White Quota alone left the polar regions. The Yellow Quota, waiting an hour, started next. Fast on the heels of the Yellow Quota came those from the Black Zone.

The propelling power of the invisible rays of the fifty-fifth octave swept them along at two-thirds the speed of light. The six slightly larger ships which carried the leaders of each zone were also equipped with the fifty-sixth octave and were able to travel within a few miles of the speed of light itself.

On and on they sped. From far off the Second Great Expedition like the split tail of a comet cleaved the void of space at two-thirds the speed of light. Each quota of men and women kept to themselves in long, quivering lines. There was no attempt for one to mingle with the other.

Five years passed. The sun had long ago dwindled to the brightness of an ordinary pin-point of light. It was far inferior in brightness to Sirius toward which they were speeding. Five long, uneventful years have slowly crawled by since they left the limits of the solar system behind. The officers on all ships had decided to celebrate the day. There was, of course, neither day, nor night, nor year out there, but they governed themselves according to their chronometers which kept Earth-time.

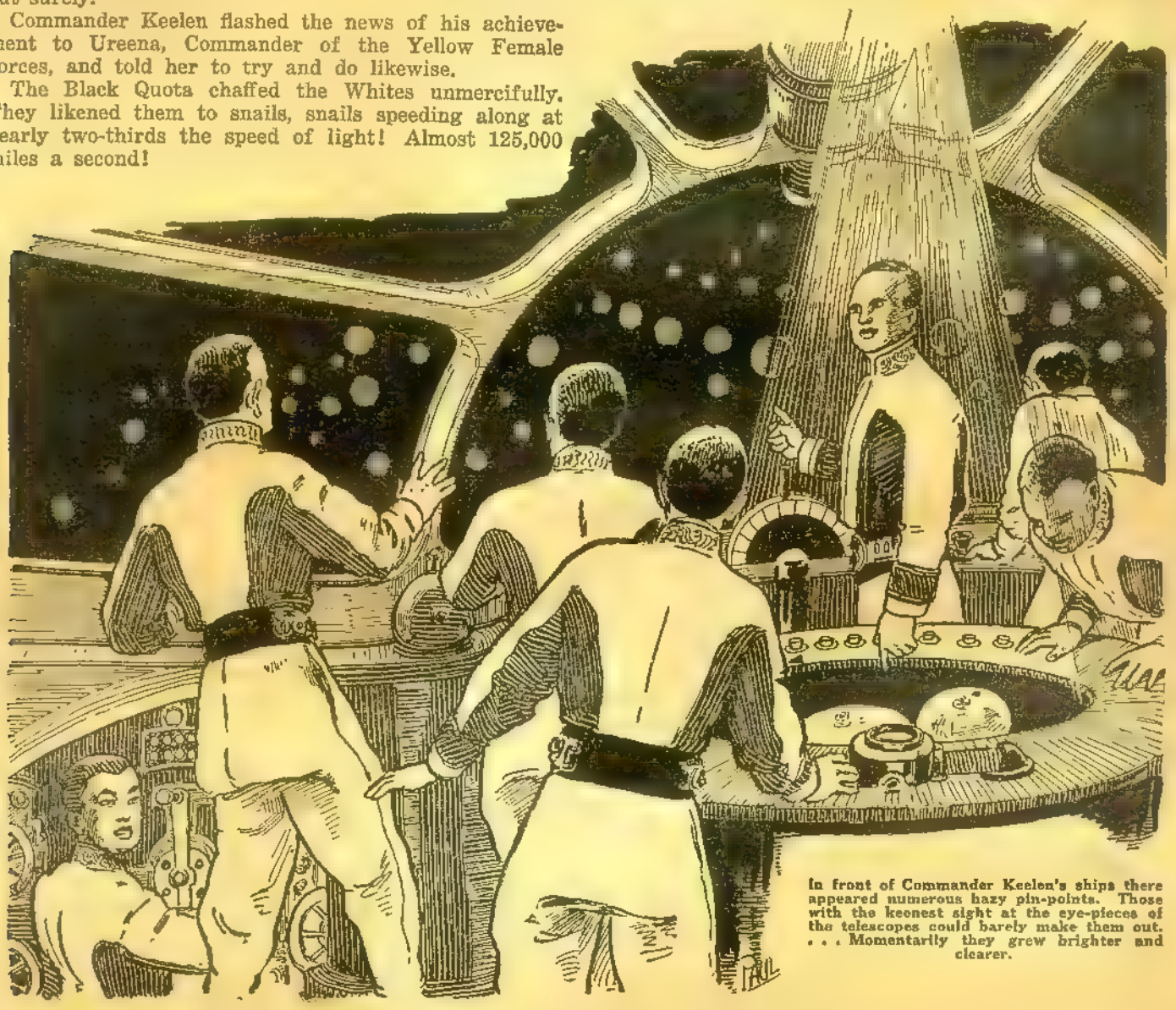
Another year passed. They were in direct radio communication with each other. Nothing broke the dreadful monotony of the seemingly endless journey. The accompanying will that the inhabitants of Earth had sent out to spur them on was beginning to make itself felt as their own enthusiasm lagged. They needed something to spur them on. Out there in the depths of space between stars there was nothing, absolutely noth-

ing. Not even a lonely comet flashed by. The rank and file of the expedition were still sunk in a death-like coma, and for them, naturally, time did not exist.

The Yellow Quota of men who had started in second place began to gain on the leaders. The officers of the White Quota, sensing a means to break the terrible monotony, a race, increased the speed of their ships to the utmost limit. Still the Yellow legions continued to draw near. Little by little they crept up until at length the lines of the two quotas flashed along side by side. The Yellow Quota held that position for a while and then began to draw ahead slowly but surely.

Commander Keelen flashed the news of his achievement to Ureena, Commander of the Yellow Female forces, and told her to try and do likewise.

The Black Quota chaffed the Whites unmercifully. They likened them to snails, snails speeding along at nearly two-thirds the speed of light! Almost 125,000 miles a second!



In front of Commander Keelen's ships there appeared numerous hazy pin-points. Those with the keenest sight at the eye-pieces of the telescopes could barely make them out. . . . Momentarily they grew brighter and clearer.

Commander Ureena and her quota began to get ahead. The two halves of the expedition, the men and the women, were about one light hour apart, the distance that it takes light one hour to cross.

The officers, dulled by long years of endless monotony, into the belief of the absolute emptiness of space between suns, had ceased to be on the lookout. Each ship was equipped with two extremely powerful telescopes. The telescopes, which had been used almost continuously at first, were rarely used now. It would have been suicidal for the Second Great Expedition to have to depend upon men peering through the telescopes to disclose objects that lay in their path at the terrific velocity they were traveling. The ships were one and all equipped with electrical instruments to warn the expedition of danger far ahead, the six that carried the leaders had instruments of far greater delicacy.

The Yellow Quota was in the lead. Far in front of the main body of the Yellow forces hurtled the interstellar ship that carried Commander Keelen. Behind the Yellow Quota in a long line followed the White force which had not been able to regain the first place it had lost.

Suddenly the instruments in Commander Keelen's ship began to give warning of some impending danger far ahead. The officers, who had been everywhere but at their proper places, hurried to their stations. Telescopes were trained ahead. Nothing could be seen. The instruments continued to sound their warnings, stronger each instant.

He sent warning back to the rest of the expedition and commanded them to come to a full stop as quickly as they could. He then ordered ten ships of his quota to go slowly forward with him to investigate.

In front of Commander Keelen's ships there appeared numerous hazy pin-points of light. Those with the keenest sight at the eye-pieces of the telescopes could barely make them out. They were almost at the limit of vision. Momentarily they grew brighter and nearer. They began to take on form. The pin-points of light were all revolving rapidly around a common center. The instruments that they trained upon them showed that each pin point of light was of disk-like

formation and measurable. Calculations gave them a diameter that ranged from four to eight miles. They had probably come from the direction of Sirius and were traveling in the general direction of the solar system.

He had the information flashed back to the rest of the expedition that directly in front of them were hundreds of spheres, each from four to eight miles in diameter. He gave the order to the ten ships to follow him more closely. It was a dangerous thing to do. The spheres were approaching at a terrific speed.

The spheres were whirling swiftly around each other. In their forward flight through the void of the interstellar space they were describing a cork-screw path. They presented a solid, impassable front. Suddenly one of the spheres, which was a little ahead of the others, paused in its whirling forward motion. The spheres behind gradually slackened their speed and came to a stop. They seemed to become aware of the eleven ships in front of them.

It was the first sign that those in Commander Keelen's ship had that the spheres contained intelligent, reasoning beings; that the spheres themselves were interstellar ships. During the next few hours it was verified in the most terrible manner. From the first ball that had paused there broke forth a flash of lurid flame, like flaming gas under pressure issuing from the mouth of a great cannon, it was followed immediately by another and then another. Nothing happened. Fifteen or more minutes later one of the mighty interstellar ships that accompanied Commander Keelen's ship in front of the expedition, crumpled up as if it had met something in headlong collision, became partially incandescent and exploded. An instant later another ship met the same fate.

Without a sound the two ships had exploded. The bolts that had come from the sphere in the lead, from monster weapons within the sphere, did their work silently. Sound must have a medium to transmit its waves, it cannot cross a vacuum.

The remaining nine ships in front stopped dead on the destruction of the two. For an instant Commander Keelen and the officers were numbed into a state of immobility by the sudden disaster that had befallen them. In each of the two ships that had gone down to instant destruction there had been ten thousand human beings!

The spheres surrounded them on all sides and were coming slowly closer. It could now be seen that the surface of those spheres were covered with bright spots like windows and the light was streaming through them from the brightly lighted interior. They presented a formidable appearance.

Were the brave legions from Earth to meet their doom in the infinite void of space far from the ringed planet that circled bright Sirius and its faint companion? Was the Second Great Expedition of man fated to be destroyed by the intelligent creatures within the globular ships of space that had come from the probable direction of Sirius? Had the inhabitants of the ringed world that circled Sirius known of man's coming and sent these death-dealing spheres out to meet him? Had they in turn scouts spying upon the inhabitants of Earth?

Lurid sheets of flame with their accompanying bolts again came from the sphere. There was another interval of about a quarter of an hour in which nothing happened, nothing was to be seen, no warning came from the electrical apparatus which was to warn the officers of an approaching body. The moments dragged by and then a bolt struck the ship which was a little behind and to the right of Commander Keelen's. Another bolt met in headlong collision with the interstellar ship that was to the left of him. Only seven remained in the front.

They came back to life with a start, the numbness dropping from them as death stared them in the face. They manned their own terrible instruments of destruction. The forward end of each ship which came to a point split into a number of segments and drew back into the interior of the ship. Out in front there remained an egg-shaped object of transparent substance resembling quartz glass. It was supported by three thick rods of the same substance. The rods and egg-shaped object in front of each ship began to glow with a pale-yellow color. It could be seen issuing for a few feet at the forward end like liquid. It traveled much slower than light.

The propelling rays of the fifty-fifth octave were turned on full. The interstellar ship started to plunge forward. Four circular holes appeared some distance back from the glowing egg-shaped object at the tip of the ship. A puff of white vapor and red flame suddenly leapt out of each of the openings. The mighty interstellar ships rocked back to the shock. The puffs of white vapor and red flames appeared at the openings of each ship again and again, swifter and swifter, until they were pouring forth continuously. Though the driving rays were on full, the ships quivered and stood still. At last the remaining seven of the eleven ships that had gone forward to investigate were going into action.

The pale-yellow glow which emanated from Commander Keelen's ship far in front of the other six reached the sphere in the lead, from which had come the bolts that had destroyed the four ships of the Yellow Quota. It touched it lightly, seemed to caress it. It was not like a beam of light, but a corpuscle stream. It spread over the sphere, like molten gold, until it had enveloped it. The sphere seemed to vibrate, became indistinct, was gone—destroyed. The glow reached over and touched another sphere.

The beings in the globular ships of space seemed to realize the menace of those pale-yellow beams. Creatures to build and operate those huge spheres must possess a very high order of intelligence. The destructive power of that pale-yellow glow was startling. Desperately, and in a solid sheet, the lurid flame and the accompanying bolts shot from the nearer spheres.

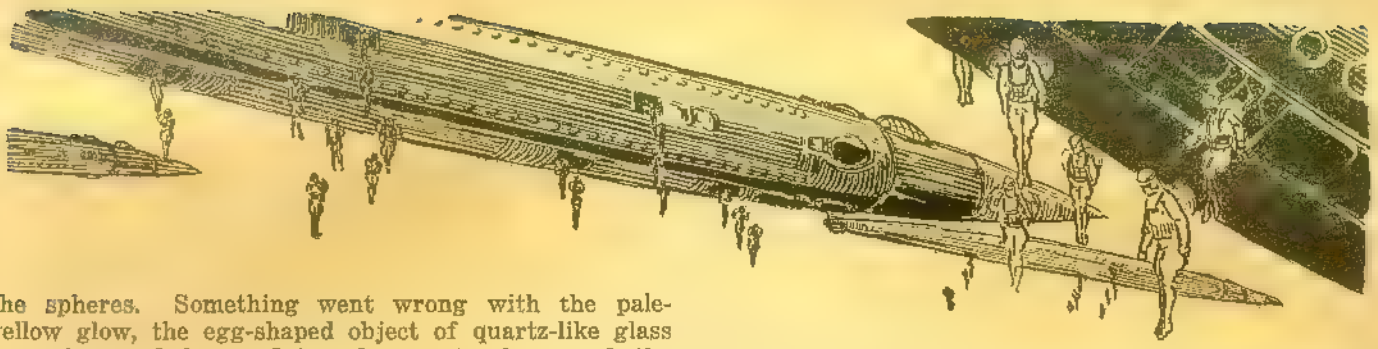
The glow from the other six ships seemed to touch with hazy golden fingers and then to caress six other spheres. What had shot from the four openings of each of the seven ships in continuous streams with the puffs of white vapor and the red flame also reached the spheres. Glowing incandescent spots began to pit the surface of a few of them.

The flashes of the lurid light with its accompanying bolts from the spheres were increasing steadily. One and then another of the interstellar ships from Earth met the bolts in headlong collision.

Globular ship of space after globular ship of space faded from sight as the pale-yellow glow spread over them. A number of the nearer spheres became so covered with incandescent spots that they became molten masses of metal.

Only five out of the original eleven interstellar ships in the front remained. Though they brought down three and more to every one of their own, they were going down to certain destruction. There were too many spheres to cope with. The bolts, hurtling all around them, picked them off one by one.

Now only two remained. One, as if by a miracle, was the mighty ship that carried Commander Keelen. His ship was causing the greatest havoc amongst



the spheres. Something went wrong with the pale-yellow glow, the egg-shaped object of quartz-like glass was shattered by a flying fragment of one of the interstellar ships.

Realizing that he was about doomed, he had word sent back that he was going to try to destroy yet one more of the globular ships of space with his own mighty interstellar ship. He did not think of turning tail. If he had any thought of retreating, it was too late now, the bolts would pick him off before he turned. He had only a few minutes to live. He sent his last farewells winging back to Earth, to the expedition, to the Yellow Quota, and to the one whom he loved more than life itself, telling them all to carry on and not let this first setback dishearten them. He, for one, was going to show those creatures how man could die. The puffs of white vapor and red flame which were being expelled from his four huge cannon ceased, the openings closed. Swiftly his ship gained headway. Each instant it doubled its speed.

The intelligent creatures who manned the spheres saw what Commander Keelen was about to attempt. They knew what would happen if his ship, traveling now at a large fraction of the speed of light, should hit one of their globular ships of space. The lurid flames with their accompanying bolts came from each sphere in a terrible stream. The other interstellar ship was hit and destroyed.

Commander Keelen's mighty ship struck a globular ship of space. There was a brilliant flare of light and both ships went up in a blinding, white-hot mass of flaming gas.

The news of Commander Keelen's destruction reached the first of the expedition. The Yellow Quota, gritting their teeth, started forward. They were heading straight for the spheres to avenge him. They wouldn't be caught by surprise.

An hour later word reached Commander Ureena that the co-commander of the Yellow forces with eleven ships had been destroyed, had gone down bravely to death. As soon as she received the message she slackened speed and swerved from the course she was following, and headed in the direction of the spheres. She, too, was going to avenge the death of her betrothed and the thousands sunk in the state of suspended animation who would never know what struck them. Behind her streamed a thousand ships of her own quota.

The spheres continued in their course. The beings inside of the spheres must have reasoned that they had destroyed all of those long, slender ships that had suddenly appeared in front of them. Those long vehicles that they had encountered voyaging across the utter void of space were terrible foes. They had weapons of unlimited destructive power, the pale-yellow glow in particular. Thirty-eight of their own great ships had been destroyed, over three to every one they had conquered. While it lasted the attack had been fearful. They must have been glad that there were only

The large doors in the sides of the ships opened and men equipped with individual flying wings strapped upon their backs, stepped out of the ships and flew down. . . . The surface of that world was covered with the bodies of the intelligent creatures, who had inhabited it. They looked like giant hairy tarantulas, over a hundred timeslarger than the largest tarantula that ever existed on Earth.

a few. If they had not struck first their loss would have been much greater. They did not know what lay ahead of them, nor of the Yellow forces with Commander Ureena at the head bent upon vengeance.

The spheres again stopped their whirling forward motion. They had hardly got under way after their terrific encounter with the eleven who had gone forward to investigate, when in front of them appeared a solid mass of those long, slender ships of space. Well did they pause. They had met with only eleven out there and destroyed them, but in destroying them they had lost thirty-eight of their own colossal ships. But now in front of them appeared thousands, and there was something in the way of their coming that breathed murderous hostility.

The creatures who operated those spheres must have reasoned that retreat was the better part of valor. If there had only been a few in front of them—well, that would have been different. They turned and headed at right angles, the direction from which Commander Ureena with her Yellow Quota would soon appear.

The men of the Yellow legions were after them with swiftly increasing speed. The rest of the expedition were also speeding up from their immense distances to lend their aid. Those globular ships of space would certainly rue the day they had met with the Second Great Expedition.

Again did the globular ships of space pause. Were the whole heavens filled with those long, slender ships? In front of them appeared the forces of the Yellow Quota, at one side, hardly visible, came the ships of the White Female Quota; while the Black legions, out of sight, followed.

They could not go forward, and at their back, massed in solid formation, came the ships carrying the men. Again they made a quarter of a turn, back in the general direction of Sirius. From a full stop they picked up their speed in an amazing fashion. Their speed was great, but not as great as the speed which the long, slender ships of the Second Great Expedition could attain.

Commander Ureena and her legions, who now led all the others in nearness to the spheres, were slowly overtaking them. Those in command of the spheres realized it. About one hundred of the globular ships of space fell back behind the others and came to a gradual stop to hold back the vengeful hosts of man for a while. From each of the spheres the lurid flame with its accompanying bolts flashed from them in a death-dealing stream. The space in front of the pursuing Yellow Quota was being strewn with those ship destroying missiles. Ship after ship crumpled up, became partially incandescent and exploded.

From the long, slender interstellar ships of the Yellow Quota at their heels the pale-yellow glow from the egg-shaped thing in front of each ship began to make its appearance. They began to touch sphere after sphere and enveloped them with their golden glow—and then they were gone. The fleet did slacken its speed, though all around them ship after ship met bolts in headlong collision and were destroyed. Soon were the hundred globular ships of space that had sought to bar the avenging hosts of man annihilated. With renewed speed the earth's ships were after the rest.

The women officers of the Yellow Quota were mad to destroy. They held that death was far too good for the creatures who were directly responsible for the death of Commander Keelen and the others in the first eleven ships.

Two-thirds of the remaining spheres slackened their speed in their headlong retreat to try to hold back the ships from Earth. The globular ships of space drew away from each other and formed a mighty barrier. Then they began to blaze away with every weapon they had. They were fighting desperately now, even as cornered rats will fight valiantly against overwhelming odds. The speed in which the hundred spheres had been despatched showed all too plainly what was in store for them. Yet they appeared willing to sacrifice themselves so that a few might escape.

Man was not having it all his own way. Though the pale-yellow glow destroyed sphere after sphere and their cannon riddled ship after ship, their long slender interstellar ships met the bolts and were destroyed by the hundreds. In the eagerness that the women of the Yellow Quota were to get at them they were even colliding with each other. That region was swiftly becoming a whirling mass of flying metal of destroyed ships. One by one the spheres met their doom. The wall of spheres held up the Second Great Expedition for some time.

After wiping out all those who had sought to bar their way, the expedition looked around to reek their vengeance upon the rest, but there was no sign of them. Even their delicate instrument could not detect them. They had disappeared.

The ships of each zone resumed some semblance of order. The Yellow forces, being in the forefront, were hit the hardest. Rolls were called. Commander Ureena's ship did not answer. Her ship had been struck early. Two hundred and forty-one ships carrying two million, four hundred and ten thousand human beings had been destroyed.

After two temporary leaders were chosen to lead the Yellow forces, the Second Great Expedition resumed its way toward the ringed world that circled bright Sirius and its fainter companion.

Time passed swiftly. The members of the expedition were wiser now. The belief in the emptiness of space was discarded. An intense vigilance was being kept. They would not be caught napping a second time, nor would they foolishly approach any body traveling through space. At a safe distance they could use their pale-yellow glow of destruction to remove it from their path.

Sirius now lit up the void of space with its white glow. The small, dense companion of Sirius stood out faintly when shielded from its white rays. Some of the larger planets would soon be made out also. Two more months and their long, hazardous journey would be at an end. The more dangerous task of landing upon that ringed world and subduing its inhabitants was yet before them.

In front of the expedition without the slightest warning there suddenly flashed a score or so of the globular ships of space. They were very small, not more than one hundred feet in diameter, and extremely swift. Two of their number turned and headed for Sirius, the rest kept on the course they had been traveling before they flashed across the sight of the expedition. Twenty ships gave chase, but the tiny spheres outdistanced them easily. More and more of the tiny spheres appeared. They made no move to attack. They were watching the expedition as it approached. Speed was their only defense. They outdistanced the pale-yellow glow. Some were cornered and destroyed, the rest sped back to their world to warn them of the immense force that was approaching.

Scouts were thrown out far ahead of the expedition. The ships came closer together. They were ready for anything. Nothing happened.

Another month passed. A jumbled, indistinct warning was received by man to halt. A ship, one of their

scouts, came hurtling back, fast upon the heels of the message it had sent, to warn the expedition that many thousands of those huge globular ships that they had met and defeated out in the void between the solar system and Sirius were heading straight for the expedition. Their number was legion.

The expedition came to a gradual stop. They spread out far and wide. The forefront of each ship opened and the egg-shaped object from which the pale-yellow glow emanated stood forth. The four circular holes farther back in each ship were also in evidence. They would get a royal welcome.

From the scouts still far in the front of the main force came word that the globular ships of space were attended by millions of tiny spheres. The scouts were retreating in front of them as fast as they could. No lurid flame with its accompanying bolt had yet been shot from the spheres.

A day—twenty-four hours—passed. The defenders were drawing near to where the Second Great Expedition lay motionless in space. They were coming to give battle. In the great telescopes aboard each long interstellar ship of the expedition they could just be made out. Their speed was slackening.

They were almost within the utmost limit of the range of the pale-yellow glow when, at the very last moment, they stopped, turned and fled back in the direction from which they had come. Not one of their missiles was shot at the expedition that lay awaiting them motionless in space. The original intention of those in the spheres had probably been to hold off the invading forces from Earth and do battle with them far from their own world.

The six commanders, thinking that it was some kind of a trap, ordered the ships to move cautiously forward. With their weapons they were confident to cope with any surprise they might encounter. More scouts were thrown ahead.

Countless hours passed. The officers stuck to their posts. Fatigue was forgotten. Time was forgotten. The discomforts of the body were forgotten. The ringed planet could be made out at last. Those at the eye-pieces of the telescopes saw thousands of the huge globular ships of space separate themselves from the ring of moonlets that circled that world and leave its neighborhood, going in the opposite direction from which the expedition were approaching. They seemed to be abandoning their world. They preferred retreat rather than to stay and face the Second Great Expedition. The survivors of those they had met out in the void of space must have returned with terrible tales. A lesson in warfare had been taught to them which they could not forget.

The expedition made no move to follow the spheres which were leaving the vicinity of Sirius. The ships of the expedition came closer and closer, searching the surface of that world for any suspicious sign. Through their powerful telescopes they scrutinized the surface of that world most minutely. When satisfied that there could be no trap, half of the officers of each ship went into the large chambers where the rank and file of the expedition lay in the state of suspended animation and began to inject the antidote to the drugs which had caused the condition that so closely resembled death.

The people who had lain down healthy and overweight were now as gaunt as skeletons. They could not rise from their bunks, or even lift their arms. For days they had to be fed and cared for before they could move weakly about. The interstellar ships, meanwhile, hung poised some distance from the planet.

Some regained their strength faster than others and were able to help the officers. Many had a relapse and died, their systems unable to stand the antidote, which was a very powerful drug. Those who recovered grew stronger and at last completely recovered.

The thousands of interstellar ships from Earth drew closer to the ringed world. Just outside of the atmosphere they circled it. Very slowly they entered into the atmosphere. From any spot on the surface of that world the inhabitants could see one or two interstellar ships sinking toward them. They were doomed. Telescopes pointing downward showed the creatures of that world moving about feverishly. The interstellar ships sank still lower.

At various points of that world thousands of tiny ships of air rose and started firing their weapons at the ships from Earth. The great guns at the forward end of each interstellar ship destroyed them. More rose and they in turn were destroyed. Guns roared from below. Bombs were dropped, wiping out the guns. At last silence reigned. No more tiny ships rose, no more guns roared at the invaders. All activity in the cities ceased. For forty-eight hours the Second Great Expedition hung menacing above the surface of that ringed world, waiting.

The interstellar ships dropped down until they were only two miles above the surface. The large doors in the sides of the ships opened and men equipped with individual flying wings strapped upon their backs stepped out of the ships and flew down. In a wide strap around their waists they carried a score of tiny but extremely powerful bombs. They were the rank and file of the expedition and fluttered down like a plague of locusts, destroying everything.

When satisfied that no living thing remained upon that world, they began to explore the wrecked cities of the former owners. Every one was eager to stretch his legs upon solid ground once again.

The surface of that world was covered with the bodies of the intelligent creatures, who had inhabited it. On Earth there were creatures who resembled them a little. The inhabitants looked like giant hairy tarantulas, over a hundred times larger than the largest tarantula that ever existed on Earth. There was not one living spider-like creature to be found, though there were countless millions of them in various stages of putrefaction strewn along the thoroughfares of their queer cities. Millions of them it was found had killed themselves long before the rank and file started dropping their bombs.

Realizing his mistake too late, man searched in every nook and cranny of that world in the hope of finding some of them alive. Their civilization was great and much could have been learned from them. They found books composed of thin metal plates covered with strange script. Men and women were set to the task of deciphering them.

Meanwhile the men and women were clearing those strange cities away and plowing under the surface of that world, probably the first time its surface ever felt the plow, and getting ready to plant the seeds which they had brought with them.

The men and women who were set to work to decipher the books found the key. The whole history of the conquered world was being rapidly unfolded to man. He found that those intelligent spiders were equal to him in intelligence. In metal working and various sciences they were even ahead of him.

In some of the older records it told of the first two interstellar ships which came to their world and how the crew was destroyed, then it told farther on how the ten who had come seeking the two had been

lured down from their great height and destroyed by using the first two ships as a decoy. Then it told how they learned the secret of interstellar travel from the interstellar ships they had brought down. With that knowledge they built small ships and visited the small moonlets that composed the ring around their world. They hollowed the interior of some of the moonlets and fitted in a driving mechanism similar to the driving mechanism of the long, slender vehicles that had come to them from another world. They, too, were going to visit other worlds.

In other records of a later date it was learned that the spider-like creatures were making preparations to invade distant worlds that circled a yellow dwarf star that was but nine light years away—our sun! The hundreds of huge globular ships—larger hollowed out moonlets equipped with a powerful driving mechanism of rays—that the expedition had met and all but destroyed in the open void of space between Sirius and the solar system, were but the first vanguard of the invaders.

The Second Great Expedition was just in time!

After the second crop was harvested and everything going well on the ringed world, the leaders sent four hundred of the long interstellar ships back to earth to return with live stock they were desperately in need of. Many thousands of animals could be brought back with the aid of the drugs inducing the state of suspended animation.

When the men returned to Earth, thirty-one years after they had first started out with the expedition, they found the inhabitants of the three zones busily engaged in planning the Third Great Expedition, a greater expedition than those preceding it, scheduled to start a thousand years hence!

THE END.

A Modern Atlantis

BY FREDERICK ARTHUR HODGE

(*Continued from* 195)

under any circumstances be seen. He led the group down the ramp into the Palm Garden where he told them the dramatic story of the past week on the isleport; of Holden's wound; of the death of the spy; and of the final defeat of the European Alliance. An internationally famed reporter for the Associated Press requested and obtained access to the wireless room from which the story was sent to the waiting press of America and the World.

An army surgeon and nurses had come with one of the planes and immediately upon his arrival was conducted to the bedside of the wounded man. After a careful examination, he warmly commended Miss Cromwell and Jerry Scott for their work. The wound had been thoroughly disinfected and showed every indication of healing. But the fever; that was due to the shock and exposure, and all they could do would be to assist nature. To this end, he devoted all his attention and skill, but he foresaw that it would take many days, possibly weeks before the fever could be thrown off. Meantime the patient must have absolute quiet and careful nursing. He wanted to send for another nurse to assist in the work, but Kitty Cromwell would not hear of it, and the surgeon who had acquired much wisdom beyond that which he had learned from books, yielded to her. Bulletins were sent out daily concerning Holden's condition, and in the busy marts of trade and the homes of a thankful people, they were awaited with hope and scanned with thanksgiving, that at least there was no change for the worse. And day by day, the fever was expending itself and the hopes for recovery grew stronger.

Late on the day following the arrival of the airplanes, a fleet of fast cruisers arrived off the isleport. A boat was lowered and conveyed a Rear Admiral to the structure where he was received by Jerry Scott on the lower deck. The fleet had already picked up the story sent from the isleport and the Admiral came to pay his respects to Holden through his companions, and to offer them any service that might be within the power of the Government to bestow. A conference was held in the Palm Garden at which it was decided to send to the isleport a Guard of Marines together with wireless operators, mechanicians, a chef and assistants. The medical force was augmented by two more Naval Surgeons. In the morning the fleet would return, leaving one battle cruiser to cruise around in the vicinity of the isleport. Two airplanes were also to remain with them.

With the disposition of forces completed, the Admiral, surgeons and others remained in quiet converse in the Garden until long after night had fallen. Jerry Scott was asked concerning many details of the battle, all of which he answered in a manner that reflected the credit for the entire defense upon his friend and Miss Cromwell. But he firmly refused all suggestions to show his visitors the apparatus that had wrought the destruction. That, he said, was a matter solely for Bob Holden to decide.

The days passed slowly and stretched themselves into weeks. On the isleport, matters had settled into a daily routine as they waited for the fever to wear itself out. Radio messeges expressing wishes for Holden's recovery were received by the thousand from public officials all over the World. The Trans-Atlantic Airplane Service, Inc., asked Jerry Scott to take full charge of their interests on the isleport during Holden's illness, and he soon found himself flooded with a multitude of details that made the time pass more rapidly. But he never remained away from Holden's bedside for very long intervals, especially after the crisis had passed and his friend was able to listen to him as he talked.

OCTOBER had come and over Atlantis lay the peaceful haze of Indian Summer. The fever that had for so long held sway in Holden's body and brain, had finally spent itself but it had taken fearful toll of his once athletic figure. The will to live, the intensity of his desire, and the incessant care of Kitty Cromwell, aided by the united skill of his physicians, had at last triumphed. Then had come days of recuperation, each day adding visibly to his strength. Finally came the

day when he asked to be wheeled out into the Palm Garden. There was an understanding light in the eyes of both Holden and his nurse, as they talked together beneath the waving branches, and the sunlight made moving delicate patterns of the palm leaves which chased each other across the steamer robe that protected him from the bracing October air. The fall flowers flaunted their gaudy colors on every grassy bank. It was the season when life finds its deepest, happiest significance.

Jerry Scott wandered about the isleport. He could not blind himself to the love that had come to crown the lives of his two best friends and the knowledge of what it meant to both of them would forever seal within him the vision of a hope which had twice been shattered. His walk finally brought him to where they were sitting and, in response to a call from Kitty Cromwell, he joined them.

"Jerry," said Bob, "I have always wanted to ask you where you and Kitty had known each other before that day when you met in the circular room."

Jerry looked at Kitty Cromwell who nodded her assent, then he said. "You remember one winter's night in 1922, at the Harvard Club when I read from a newspaper about Jack Rutherford."

Kitty Cromwell flinched as if she had been struck, turned pale and looked furtively from one to the other.

"Then," said Holden slowly, as he raised himself in his chair, "what you are trying to tell me is that Kitty is Jack's wife."

"Not is, but was. Jack shot himself soon afterwards. I went out there to his home to find her, but she had disappeared. I hunted everywhere,—"

But Kitty Cromwell had fainted.

Quickly Scott ran and brought water from the fountain to bathe her face, but when he returned she was already recovering.

"I did not know:" she said in a whisper.

"On that night at the Harvard Club," resumed Jerry, "I was overwrought when I read that item in the paper. And to a few friends, Bob among them, I told the story of that day in the Argonne, of you—and Jack—and of the Hell that war had brought in your lives. I know that Jack didn't do it. It was war that did it."

He paused and they saw how deeply he was moved. But soon he looked up at them and smiled as he resumed.

"Well, Bob took a pledge that night although he had never seen you, Kitty. I have it here." He produced a small book from his pocket and opened it; "In honor of this woman who has given so much, I pledge myself and whatever I can do, to the abolition of war." And we all drank a toast that night, "To The Abolition Of War."

He arose and taking a hand of each in his, own placed them together as he said: "Bob has fulfilled his pledge." Then he turned and left them.

Epilogue

In a specially constructed vault at the Harvard Club, reposes the positive ray machine, transferred there from Atlantis. With it, is a complete discription of the apparatus and a technical report of its principles and method of operation.

The combination to the vault is in possession of a self-perpetuating Committee of five men, renowned for their efforts in stimulating international friendships. Each member of the Committee is under solemn oath not to reveal the combination except by unanimous consent and in the interests of World Peace.

THE END

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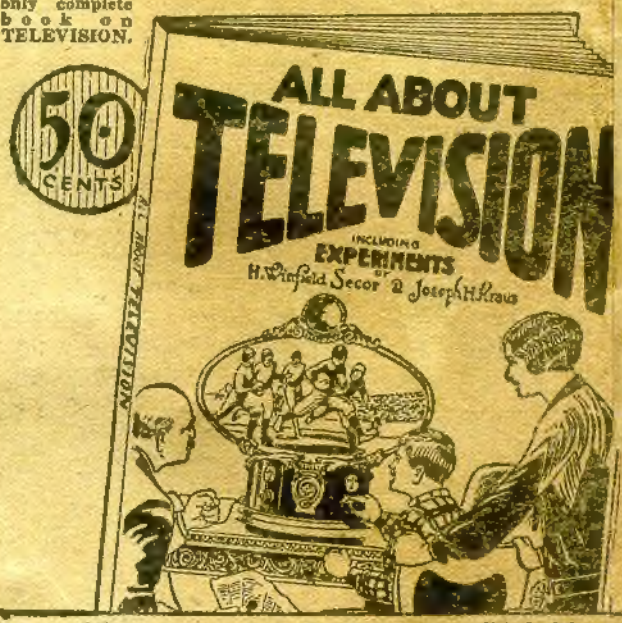

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